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Live Jesus and Mary

The Religious of Our Lady of Charity in Solitude

or

Meditations for an Eight-Day Retreat

According to the Spirit of
BLESSED JOHN EUDES

BY A RELIGIOUS OF THE MONASTERY
OF BESANÇON, FRANCE

Translated from the French

Each one must strive after perfection according to her vocation—DIRECTORY XIV.

MONASTERY OF OUR LADY OF CHARITY,
Toronto, Ont., Canada.
1918.

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PREFACE

The Author of this book should have given it a preface. She would not and asked a friend of the House to do it for her. Then, too, I would be less hampered than she in telling the origin of her book and its aim.

Every retreat, no matter what method is used, does good. When a soul has placed herself, by prayer and recollection, under the special influence of the Holy Ghost, it is not possible that this Divine Spirit does not speak to her heart, show her what is wrong in her and inspire her with generous resolutions to return to her first fervour or to soar still higher in light and love. Before St. Ignatius wrote his exercises and somewhat codified the rules of a retreat, how often, after a few days spent in silence at the foot of the Crucifix, souls were seen wholly transformed, soaring to the highest sanctity, i.e., to heroic virtue and love of God even unto the folly of the Cross.

Still, no one can deny that St. Ignatius has given retreats quite a new efficacy, by his rational and well-arranged method, making the soul pass from fear of punishment to the love of virtue and grounding her in a firm and sincere resolution to follow our Lord Jesus Christ in all things.

Does this mean that St. Ignatius' work may supply everything for all sorts of persons? No, assuredly not. St. Ignatius wrote for Christians in general and did not and could not go into the details of particular vocations. Who can deny that different vocations require different kinds of self-examination for the past and different resolutions for the future?

Since there is a question here of a retreat for Religious, who can deny that a Religious has different duties from a woman of the world, that she is called to different virtue, confined to a different mode of life. In her case, tepidity and sin, since, alas, tepidity and sin may creep in everywhere, assume a different character, expose to different dangers, lead to different consequences.

And among Religious themselves, obligations vary on certain points; in the active life, they differ from the contemplative life; in the latter, prayer should be more prolonged, penance more austere; in the former exterior work and zeal supply for shorter prayer and less austere penance. The special aim given by founders to their Institutes also varies the duties. One Order must specially reproduce the poverty of our Saviour,

another His penance. The zeal of one will be directed to little children, whom our Saviour loved so much; the zeal of another to sinners of whom our Saviour Himself said that "there is more joy in Heaven at the conversion of one of them than at the perseverance of ninety-nine just."

Under pain of being unfaithful to their mission and since *each one*, as Bl. Fr. Eudes has well said, *should strive after perfection according to her vocation*, Religious must, during a retreat, not only permeate themselves with the virtues peculiar to all virgins consecrated to God, but also with the virtue and form of zeal peculiar to their Institute.

The Religious of Our Lady of Charity are more obliged to it than others In the cloister, where they are bound by Perpetual Vows, obliged to the recitation of the Office of the Blessed Virgin and to all the minute practices prescribed in the Rule of St. Augustine which they follow, united among themselves by an exquisite charity, *they exercise moreover an apostolate apart and absolutely extraordinary*, viz.: the restoration and preservation of innocence. Assuredly it is a noble and holy mission. Our Saviour inaugurated it Himself, when, to bear her so high, He raised the sinner of Magdala. With His own hand he marked out its rules in the Gospel and after Him, eminent men, among whom Blessed Eudes stands prominent, have vaunted it, preached it and rendered it easier by counsels and rules, in which they have

included and enlarged, as it were, the evangelical programme.

No one will, however, dispute that this mission is delicate and difficult and that it is necessary for these Religious to frequently renew their horror of the least faults, their fervour in fulfilling their various duties, in obeying the prudent prescriptions of their Constitutions, permeating themselves with the spirit of their Order in devoting themselves with an ever-increasing zeal to prayer in all its forms.

General reflections suiting all persons are useful to them, but do not suffice. With this help alone they will not make a sufficiently close and complete scrutiny of the past; they will not take sufficiently precise resolutions for the future, by anticipating negligences in their very source. A means, a grace of sanctification will be wanting and there will be a void in their religious formation.

Many means are daily employed in Communities to fill this gap. A Religious has been led by Providence to furnish a new one; a retreat book. This Religious had all the requisites of success. She has lived many years in a fervent Community and filled many charges. Being in charge of the Class of the Heart of Mary, she has to give her children frequent pious instructions for which she drew from the many pious books in the House, especially from those of Blessed Father Eudes, with whose spirit she

was absolutely permeated. At the same time she used to write sketches of the deceased Religious, one of which, of a former Superior, who was by turns Mistress of the Penitents, Mistress of Novices and Superior, assumed the proportion of a book.

So she was obliged to study closely and as it were, analyse the Religious virtues and all the secrets of the interior life. Hence sprang the idea of a retreat book in which she would set forth in detail the duties imposed by each charge, the virtues these duties demand, the motives most likely to make us desire those virtues and fulfil those duties.

It is this book fully justified as we see, that her Community now offers to Communities of the Refuge and of the Good Shepherd, to the Hospitaliers and to all Communities devoted to the active life. The complimentary approbations which follow show that the aim of the author has been attained, dispense from any further eulogy and allow us to foresee the good it is likely to do.

May it help to establish more definitely the reign of the Word Incarnate in all those who read it. This is the only desire of the Author as all who know her can testify.

CH. BLANCHOT,
Chaplain of the Poor Clares of Besançon.

21st Feb., 1898.

APPROBATIONS

Archbishopric of Besançon.

Besançon, June 17th, 1898.

My Dear Child:

I have received the volume in which you have offered the fruits of your experience and piety to guide your Sisters in their "Spiritual Exercises." Under the title "The Religious of Our Lady of Charity in Solitude," you have methodically grouped various subjects of education to occupy an eight-day retreat.

After the letter of approbation given by my Vicar-General, your Superior, I need not here set before your readers a special appreciation of your work; and I am well aware that you do not desire an eulogy; you seek only the approval of God, the applause of angels and the good of souls.

But as a pledge of the results expected you desire your Archbishop's blessing on the work you have undertaken. To this blesing, which I gladly send you, I add my most sincere wishes for the success of the book and the consolation of the Author. I pray God that your pious Meditations may produce in souls all the good you have a right to expect and that your zeal desires.

Accept, my dear child, the assurance of my most religious and paternal devotedness.

FULBERT,
Archbishop of Besançon.

Letter from Rev. Father Ange Le Doré, Superior-General of the Eudist Congregation.

My Very Dear Sister:

They have given me a very complimentary account of the retreat you have just composed according to the spirit of Bl. Fr. Eudes, especially for the Sisters of the Order of Our Lady of Charity.

I have myself read some of it and was struck by the spirit of piety which reigns throughout, the soundness of your ideas and even the style in which you have expressed them. I am convinced that those who meditate on its pages will draw real profit from it. I would like to see this work in the hands of every daughter of our Blessed Founder.

Accept, my dear Sister, the expression of my most fraternal and religious respect in Our Lord,

ANGE LE DORE.

Abbeville, Dec. 30th, 1897.

Lamballe, June 21st, 1898.

Bishopric of St. Brieuc.

My Dear Child:

I willingly add my commendation of the book before me entitled "The Religious of Our Lady of Charity in Solitude," and composed by one of the Sisters of the Refuge. Kindly tell the author that I bless her work and wish it every success.

Accept, my dear child, the assurance of my respectful devotedness.

PIERRE MARIE,
Bishop of St. Brieuc and Tréguier.

Letter from His Excellency Most Rev. Mgr. Piavi, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, June 12th, 1898.

My Dear Sister:

You were so kind as to send me your volume of Meditations for an eight-day retreat. I thank you and gladly add my approbation to those you have already received. Without mentioning the new form you have given to old truths, there is a perfume of piety and fervour in its pages which holds one captive. The ideas, quotations, the examples, all show that your book is the fruit of prayer, labour and reflection, the fruit of experience especially, and I could not help applying to you what our holy Liturgy says of St. Cecilia: "Famula tua quasi apis tibi argumentosa deservit!"

The Religious of Our Lady of Charity share, I know, the glory of the Apostolate and realize a good which it is not always given to the priest to accomplish. Now, the life of the Apostles had three characteristics: it was a life of close union with God, a life of sacrifice, a fruitful life. Your meditations will be a powerful aid to the Religious, to appreciate and reproduce these three characteristics and so will be useful to all those who are engaged in the education of children and the salvation of souls. I sincerely hope that your book may be circulated and meet with the success it deserves.

Receive, with my blessing, the assurance of my devotedness.

FR. LUDOVIC PIAVI, Patriarch.

Approbation of Abbé Dubillard, Vicar-General, Superior of the Refuge.

My Dear Child:

I was greatly interested and edified by your retreat Meditations for the use of the Religious of Our Lady of Charity. Your doctrine seemed irreproachable both as to matter and form. A great love for God and great charity for souls pervades every page.

Whilst reading them, I frequently asked myself this question: "Pray, where did a humble daughter of Our Lady of Charity learn all this?" I did not hesitate to answer, in prayer, in meditation, at the foot of the crucifix and before the Tabernacle. Your conscience will assuredly tell me that I am not mistaken.

Indeed these meditations were not, as many may suppose, gleaned piece-meal and re-encased in new settings; they all gushed forth from your soul, so to speak. *They are unlike anything we have hitherto read on the same subjects.* These meditations, you have made for yourself, in the innermost depths of your heart and many times perhaps before giving them to the public. You have made sincere efforts to practise what you teach. You have yourself felt and experienced what you wish to make others feel and experience. Such are the books that are really useful in practical life, because they do not ramble into cold abstractions, because they were lived before they were written.

So I feel convinced that these meditations so full of the spirit of your Blessed Founder, of the ideal you have performed of Religious perfection, of the means you have followed and still follow to attain it, will produce true, real and solid good in our dear Religious of Our Lady of Charity, as well as in all souls in other Communities or in the world, who wish to use them.

Therefore, I willingly approve this beautiful book, congratulating you, my dear Child, on having thought it and written it, and pray God that these meditations may efficaciously help to form Religious, inflamed with divine charity and ardently devoted to the salvation of penitent souls, that is to say, Religious such as Bl. Father Eudes wished them to be and such as you in your zeal wish to be yourself.

Pray accept, my dear Child, the assurance of my paternal devotedness,

DUBILLARD, V.G.,
Sup. of the Refuge.

Besançon, Feb. 8, 1898.

It would be impossible to here insert all the approbations of our Bishops and the encouragement addressed to the Author. We will quote only the following appreciation from the Review of the Heart of Mary, which was copied by several publications:

"We have here a work that merits special notice. The Author is a Religious of Our Lady of Charity of Besançon. Starting with Fr. Eudes' principle that 'each one should strive after perfection according to her vocation,' she omits none of the general considerations which may excite fervour, but she endeavours especially to set forth the particular motives which may induce a Religious of her Order to attain the special perfection which God destines her to attain.

"Rules, Constitutions, Directory, Customs, Annals, writings of members of her Order, have all contributed to it; they have been meditated, elucidated, relished—especially relished—for this Religious seeks to teach nothing but what she lovingly practised herself and what her duties called upon her to teach.

"It is desirable that every Religious Institute should be endowed with a treasure similar to the one with which the Order of Our Lady of Charity of the Refuge and the Good Shepherd have just been enriched. Meanwhile every Religious might profitably adopt this work to guide her in her spiritual exercises. For although it is specially suitable for private retreats, such as are customary in the Order, by meditating on them, one can easily arrive at analogous applications conformable to the spirit of each Community. Thus each will have a model of the plan that she may follow with her own Rule, Customs, etc., so as to make it the ordinary source of her meditations.

"Every Religious House would do well to arrange to make their retreats on the plan of the "Religious of Our Lady of Charity in Solitude." The volume is not in the market, but the Superior of the Monastery of Besançon will willingly procure it for Communities desirous of knowing it. And those who procure it will at the same time assist a deserving Monastery."

In addition to the preceding approbations, the following have since been received:

The Eminent Cardinal Barocchi, Vicar of His Holiness Leo XIII., has sent congratulations to the Superior of Besançon and Cardinal Ledochowki, ponent of Blessed Father Eudes' cause, writes:

"I have read the Retreat Book composed in the spirit of Blessed Father Eudes, and was delighted with it. I congratulate the author, thank you, Rev. Mother, and bless the whole community."

Rev. Father Mallet, the zealous Postulator of Father Eudes' Cause, writes from Rome:

I am very thankful, Rev. Mother, for the magnificent gift you have sent me. With what a treasure your holy Order has been enriched! It is fully imbued with the spirit of good Father Eudes, which I imbibe from its true source, the writings of our Blessed Father and which I also find perfectly reproduced in all the writings of Ven. Mother Mary of St. Euphrasia, and I would have thought it the work of the latter, if I had not known that one of our dear Sisters of Besançon was its author. Apart from our Ven. Sister M. of St. Euphrasia, Foundress of the Good Shepherd, has our pious Father a daughter who knows him better than the Author of "The Religious of Our Lady of Charity in Solitude?" I doubt it. May that dear Monastery of Besançon receive many, many blessings, and may the Divine Heart of Jesus open and pour out on each of our Sisters its sacred flames which are the spirit of Our Lady of Charity in all its perfection!

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Holy Heart Seminary,
Halifax, N.S.

Dear Sister:

I have read over as carefully as time would permit the proofs of your translation of "La Religieuse de N.D. de Charité en Solitude," composed by our esteemed Sister M. of St. Theresa Larcher of Besançon. It seems quite a true rendering of the French text.

I have no doubt that it will supply a need felt by all our English-speaking Sisters of Our Lady of Charity of the Refuge and of the Good Shepherd in the many Retreats which they make every year, either privately or in common. I take pleasure in recommending it to them, as well as to any other Religious Communities looking for Meditations well suited to inflame love for God and zeal for souls.

Yours sincerely in Our Lord,

J. B. O'REILLY, C.J.M.

Feast of the Assumption,
August 15th, 1918.

LIVE JESUS AND MARY

The Eve of Retreat:

"It is a very holy and a very important practice and one of which only those who have tried it can fully realize the utility, to devote a certain time every year to prayer and pious exercises with more than ordinary care. As persons in the world, in addition to their ordinary meals, sometimes have extraordinary feasts and banquets; so all Christians who profess to lead a holy life, should, in addition to their ordinary exercises of devotion, have extraordinary spiritual feasts and banquets at which they endeavour to love and serve God with more fervour and devotion than usual. To converse with God by means of holy meditation is truly a real happiness and pleasure.

"St. Paul exhorts all Christians (and with greater reason Religious) to this retreat, when he advises them to lay aside their ordinary occupations for a time and devote themselves to prayer. This has been practised from all time in the Church of Christ. We read of many Saints and Prelates of the Church, who frequently withdrew into solitude to devote some time to contemplating, loving and glorifying God.

"This retreat should be made chiefly for three ends: (1) To continue and honour the various retreats of Jesus, viz: the retreat He made from all Eternity in the bosom of His Father; that which He made for nine months in the womb of His Mother; for forty days in the stable at Bethlehem; for seven years in Egypt; the time of His hidden life in Nazareth, which lasted till His thirtieth year; for forty days in the desert; in Heaven and in the glory of His Father since His

Ascension; in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, where He has been in retreat and leading a hidden life for more than nineteen centuries.

"Or else to honour the various retreats of the Blessed Virgin, and the part she has had in those of her Divine Son.

"Thus the first intention of a retreat should be to love and glorify Jesus and His most holy Mother; to attach ourselves and give ourselves more and more to the Son and the Mother.

"(2) During the time of the retreat, to repair our faults and negligence in loving and glorifying Jesus during the year.

"(3) To form new desires and gather new strength so as to prepare ourselves to receive new graces; to walk more courageously in the path of divine Love and completely destroy every obstacle thereto.

"Lastly, we should consider the retreat as a Paradise and the time destined for it as a portion of Eternity, and endeavour to do during this time what is being done in Paradise now and during Eternity; beginning here below the life and exercises which will occupy us for all Eternity in Heaven, viz.: to contemplate, love and glorify God as the Blessed contemplate, love and glorify Him unceasingly in Heaven.

"Let us also consider and employ the time of retreat as if that were all of life and time that remained to us, to love and glorify Jesus and to repair the faults of our life in loving and glorifying Jesus. Above all we should protest and desire to employ ourselves wholly in those holy exercises, not for our own consolation, our own merit, nor our own interest, but solely for the good pleasure of Jesus and for His greater glory."—(Life and Reign of Jesus).

Thoughts of Rev. Mother Mary Angelica de Balde on Retreats.

To have the spirit of one's vocation is to have the spirit of our Blessed Founder. In the following instructions, we recognize a daughter of Bl. Father Eudes.

"We should cherish the time of our retreats," she would say to her spiritual daughters, "these are the days which The Lord has made for our sanctification. Happy days, precious moments by which we must profit. The retreat is a withdrawal from creatures and a drawing close to God. Here we have in a few words a summary of this important exercise: Our Spouse wishes to be alone with us, to converse with us heart to heart. Let us beware lest among His kindly words of peace there be some which may not be so agreeable. There will be some go so far as to divide the soul and body, for if we wish to enjoy interior communication with God, we must die to ourselves. Without this death there can be no life. Our Lord, in telling us that we must seek the Kingdom of God, gives us to understand that there are other kingdoms and that we may lose our way. 1. The demon has his kingdom, for Jesus Christ calls him in several places in the Gospel, the prince of this world. 2. There is also the kingdom of self-love which has many partisans. 3. Lastly there is the kingdom of grace, which is the one Our Lord invites us to seek. By the grace of God, we have renounced that of the demon, in retiring to the cloister and professing principles quite opposed to his, but the kingdom of self-love is frequently to be found in the cloister and is greatly to be feared.

"In religious houses we often find persons who seem to live only by the spirit of grace, to act

only by the light of faith, and yet if we penetrate to the depths of their hearts we find only self-love.

"Virtue attracts admiration and therefore the desire of honour and esteem is frequently the motive of works, apparently good.

"Let us be on our guard; pride brought the first of the Angels from the highest Heaven to the lowest depths of Hell; it may also overthrow the most solid pillars of Religion, if they are not grounded on the solid rock of humility.

"The difficulties of salvation belong not to the people of the world alone. Our Lord proves this to us in the parable of the Ten Virgins, five of whom were so unfortunate as to be excluded from the marriage feast. This should make persons who have the honour of being consecrated to the service of God, tremble. Be not, my dear Sisters, like the foolish and cowardly virgins who are content to follow "the letter which killeth" and who do not endeavour to animate their actions with that "living charity" which renders them worthy of Eternal life.

"Let us observe what we have promised God, as our holy Rule prescribes, 'not as slaves under the law,' but as loving and faithful spouses, who delight in the exact observance of their duties."—(Annals P. 321.)

FIRST MEDITATION.

For the Eve of the Retreat.

Retreat is a time of rest. "Venite seorsum in locum desertum et requiescite pusillum." Come apart into a desert place and rest a little. Mark vi., 31.

First Point.—"Now, the Apostles coming together unto Jesus, related to Him all things that they had done and taught" (Mark vi., 31). Behold the Apostles eagerly and lovingly hastening to their Divine Master on their return from each of their missions; they are our models to-day.

We are apostles by our vocation as Religious of Our Lady of Charity and like them, have been sent two and two, to souls; like them, too, we return each year to give the Divine Master an account of all we have done and taught.

Daughter of Our Lady of Charity, hearken to the Voice of your Spouse Who says: "Venite, come"—Yes, come! Leave the crowd, leave your ordinary occupations, leave even the souls entrusted to you. The Apostles came alone to Jesus. Come alone too. But above all, come to Jesus, as near as possible, there, and there only, you must make your retreat. "The Apostles coming together unto Jesus gave Him an account"; this is one of the ends of the retreat. It is not always an easy or a pleasant task to give an account to another because frequently we cannot give an account to ourselves. How frequently we are deluded as to our personal value and that of our acts? We are agreeably deceived. Sometimes even we fly from the salutary light which would reveal our innumerable miseries to us.

In our own heart, we find ourselves in an unknown land. And without the obligation of exploring ourselves in the holy tribunal of Penance, we would be still more ignorant of ourselves. But thanks to this necessity, we dare not turn our attention away from ourselves completely. At certain times we even concentrate our attention in all sincerity upon our soul in order to give a more exact account of our life to our Director and

to ourselves. We must give this account, not only to those who direct us, but above all, to Jesus. "To This Intelligence." Who analyses us perfectly. To this God Who knows the graces He has bestowed upon us and the good we might have accomplished with His Divine aid. He knows all; still let us not fear. Our Master is also Our Spouse. Let us spread our heart and our life wide open to His gaze. This retreat is our last perhaps, and ere long we shall have to render an account at the Supreme Tribunal. In that case, would we not wish to have our accounts in order and have only to await, with the lamp of charity in our hands, the coming of our Celestial Spouse.

"They related all that they had done and taught." I also must give an account of all that I have done, especially since my last retreat. And first of all, what have I done with this grace which contains all others—time? What have I done with this intellect whose only worthy object is the knowledge of God? What have I done with this memory whose end is to remember God and His benefits? What have I done with this will which should seek and love only the Sovereign Good? In a word, what have I done with all the occasions of sanctifying myself and glorifying God?

But I also am an apostle and by my vocation obliged to teach. During these days, Jesus is going to demand an account of my teaching. For us, Religious of Our Lady of Charity, this part of the account is no less important than the first. To be a good, and even to be good Religious, for ourselves alone, does not suffice; we must also be good for the children of our adoption. We must nourish them with a holy and strong doctrine. "Teach them all things whatsoever I have

commanded you," Our Lord says to us. "Docete eos servare omnia quaecumque mandavi vobis." Are we faithful to this recommendation? What do we teach our children? Do we never falsify the pure doctrine of Jesus? Do we put anything of ourselves in it, thinking to make it better? Do we mingle anything of the spirit of the world with it, with the idea of making it more attractive and practical? Do we retrench anything? What a wide field for self-examination. To do this we have great need of calm, silence and solitude.

Second Point.—"Venite seorsum in desertum locum et requiescite pulsillum. Come apart into a desert place and rest a little." "Venite, Come." Lo, Our Beloved speaks. "Come," He says. This is (1) an invitation, (2) a call, (3) a positive command. Shall we not answer this sweet invitation of the tenderest Friend? Shall we not respond to this earnest appeal of a most Loving Spouse? Shall we resist this formal command of Our Sovereign? If we do not respond, if we do not answer, if we do not obey, woe to us. It is love that calls us and despised love wreaks terrible vengeance, all the more terrible, as the soul called was more loved.

"Come"—I will go, Lord; I will go wherever Thou wilt, for I desire nothing so much as to be closely united to Thee. I will go, or rather, I am coming now. "Behold, I come." But where must I go? I know not whither Thou callest me, so speak, O my God, speak to me!"

"Venite seorsum! Come apart." Turn aside from the crowd, leave the beaten paths. This is not enough; even apart, we may see and be seen, hear and be heard. "Venite in desertum locum! Come into a desert place." I wish to speak to

thee alone, in a place where we will be neither seen nor heard by creatures whom we must forget. Your mind and your heart must be perfectly free so that you may tell Me "all that you have done and taught." Go, my soul—go joyfully into this solitude—the private study of your Spouse. But hark! He speaks again. "Requiescite pusillum," He says. "Rest a little." So retreat is a time of rest. O rest, like happiness, is rare and of short duration in this world! To rest often and long is not our destiny here below. Therefore, Jesus, after having said "Rest," adds immediately "a little." To rest sometimes and a little is possible, therefore, and it is even necessary and very sweet. "Requiescite pusillum!" But what rest are we to seek on retreat? First, rest of mind; of the mind wearied by a multitude of thoughts which besiege and envelop it on all sides. We leave one preoccupation only to fall into another; we often have ten of them at once. The mind is troubled, bewildered and succumbs. On retreat we leave every foreign thought on the threshold of the sanctuary. The mind, attracted by the only sweet thought of God, finds peace and rest. And the heart! is it not weary too? Weary of desiring, fearing, suffering and loving? Yes, of loving, for the purest affections especially when not ruled by God, may cause great trouble and real fatigue. During the retreat, the heart seeks refuge in God, in the Sacred Heart of Jesus; there it lays down its griefs and unburdens its cares, lays aside its affections with its gloomy cortege of cares and alarms and rests in submission, confidence and abandonment and especially in love of God which dominates all its other loves. "Requiescite pusillum."

And our will, so often tossed about by its inconstancy, discouraged by its incessant temptations, worn out in the struggle against deeply rooted and rebellious faults? It, too, is fatigued and comes to the retreat to gain new strength, courage and energy; so there is rest for it too. "Requiescite pusillum."

Lastly, conscience, tortured perhaps by a sorrowful past insufficiently expiated, by painful memories, by a deplorable indecision between duty and passion, between nature and grace, between the world and God; conscience, troubled and hesitating, plays a great part, a decided resolution in the retreat and there it, too, finds rest and peace. "Requiescite pusillum!" Rest a little.

In a word, the whole soul, Child of Heaven, is wearied by its contact with earth, takes its flight to its true country and goes to rest in the delicious solitude of the blessed Eternity to which it aspires, in the very bosom of its God. Oh this is a sweet, a delightful rest!

Third Point.—"For there were many coming and going; and they had not so much as time to eat, and going up into a ship, they went into a desert place apart." Mark vi., 31-32.

By the first words of this text, St. Mark shows us that these persons who were going and coming to Jesus would have troubled the Apostles in giving their report of their mission and in their rest. They had to separate themselves not only from the Pharisees, Publicans and sinners in order to speak with Jesus and rest from their labours, but also from persons who were coming to their Divine Master in all sincerity; so let us leave our best friends, even those who, like ourselves, are disciples of Jesus. At an ordinary time their words might help us, during the retreat our Belov-

ed wants to speak alone. If we have a real desire to hear His beloved voice, we must silence all creatures, we must silence ourselves completely. Let us not speak to those who are making the retreat with us. I will say more: Let us not speak without real necessity to our Superior, outside of the time when that is permitted. In reward for this mortification, the voice of our Dear Jesus will be sweeter and more penetrating.

"They had not so much as time to eat." How often does it happen that, absorbed by the duties of our charge, the care and solicitude inherent in every work of education of restoration, "we have not so much as time to eat," at least, at leisure, the necessary bread of the word of God. But what is more indispensable than to take one's meals? We can not abstain from them several times in succession without injuring our health, perhaps exposing our life. It is the last thing which we can forget, one for which we can always find time, even when we have none for anything else. And we are right; but is the soul worth less than the body? Or can it live without food? How is it, then, that we take so little care of its health? Why do we not take "time to eat" in the repose of recollection and prayer, in all the pious exercises prescribed by our Rules, the bread which should nourish and strengthen? We would like to. Frequently the pangs of hunger and thirst for a more perfect justice make us sigh for this divine food; but creatures do not leave us even time to eat. Our case is like that of the Apostles; let us imitate them.

"They went up into a ship to go into a desert place apart." This is their response to the sweet "Venite seorsum" of Our Saviour. It was the Apostles'—let it be ours also. Let us joyfully

cast ourselves into the bark of the Sacred Heart; let us fly far from earth and its miry shores; let us place between ourselves and it the immensity of the Sea, and let us retire into a desert place apart. We are not on retreat unless we are in a desert. If our mind still encounters some creature, we are only on the threshold of solitude. Let us retire farther off. Let us bury ourselves still deeper in the desert until we no longer meet with creatures. During these holy days only God and ourselves are concerned. "Praeoccupemus faciem ejus." "Let us go before His face." Let us place ourselves opposite Him in this desert and let Him gaze into the very depths of our souls. His gaze does not trouble, it is so sweet, so pure, so purifying. Let Him consider us at leisure and let us earnestly beseech Him to tell us what He sees in us.

Let us gaze upon Him also; let us read in His divine eyes the sorrow that our sins and those numerous infidelities of which perhaps we make little account, cause Him.

Let us read in these mirrors of goodness, the pardon He is ready to grant, if we only repent, His compassion for our weakness, and, above all, the tender and ardent love with which His heart is consumed for us in spite of all our miseries.

Yes, my Good Jesus, I am on retreat! I am alone with Thee face to face. Look upon me as Thou didst look upon the unfaithful Peter, and may my soul, under the effects of Thy glance, be filled with sorrow at the remembrance of its faults. This retreat will be the tomb wherein I will bury all my imperfections. I desire to be converted at any cost in order to convert the souls whom Thou confidest to me. I desire to become a saint, so as to sanctify my sisters by

my prayers and my example, so that at least I may not be an occasion of imperfection and sin. Gaze lovingly upon me, O my Merciful and Tender Spouse. Pour into this heart which loves Thee too little for the heart of a spouse, graces so powerful that they may triumph over its cowardice and weakness. Enkindle its fires that it may burn for Thee alone.

SECOND MEDITATION.

For the Eve of Retreat.

Retreat is a Time of Labour.

"Adhuc modicum, lumen in vobis est: Ambulate dum lucem habetis ut non vos tenebrae comprehendant: Yet a little while the light is among you. Walk whilst you have the light, that the darkness overtake you not." John xii., v. 35.

First Point.—"Labour while it is light." All our labour here below is a continual march towards our heavenly home where our Divine Father awaits and calls us. "Walk" therefore means labour and vice versa. If, as we have said, retreat is a rest, it is also a labour. We never enjoy a sweeter rest, we never perform a more meritorious work (and sometimes more laborious) than during a good retreat.

1. The soul labours first of all in meditation. We must think and think much, observe attentively and listen quietly. The words of a preacher or of a retreat book are only a means of attaining this so necessary result—serious and profound meditation. Meditation where the soul, gazing into its own depths and placing itself under the

eye of God is wholle occupied with its Eternal interests. It is not the preacher nor the director who makes the retreat—it is the soul and the soul only.

Let me say, however, that this labour of reflection should go on without worry or fatigue of mind. God does not want us to be uncomfortable with Him. If He teaches us to call Him Father, is it not because He wants to be a father to us, His children.

He has said to His Religious, as well as to His Apostles, "Jam non dicam vos servos autem dixi amicos. I will not now call you servants, but friends." Let us, therefore, treat Him as a Friend as well as our Sovereign Lord.

2. The second work of the retreat lies in resolution. We must generously resolve upon what God has long been asking of us. This retreat is a loud and perhaps a last knock of our Divine Spouse upon the door of our heart. It is His final cry to awaken us from our spiritual torpor. For every soul, whatever its fervour may be, there is a step to be taken; this step is the end of the retreat. The soul which does not take this step loses its retreat and abuses a choice grace. What other grace will be strong enough to withdraw it from its deplorable state.

3. The third labour of the retreat, the one which prepares for and assures its fruits and hence the most important, is prayer, but fervent, incessant, importunate prayer, if that were possible, which may find vent in the single cry, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." Prayer offered always in union with Mary, our good Mother, in whose name God will refuse nothing; prayer said in common for each other; prayer

for those who are in greatest need of help and courage and whom God alone knows; prayer accompanied by tears and groans.

Behold me, O my God, ready to undertake this great work of retreat and to devote myself wholly to it. Give me only the strength, the fervour, the generosity necessary to do this work successfully without yielding to idleness or weariness during these holy exercises. Our Lady of Charity, I beseech thee to bless my desires and my good will; obtain for me that ardent love with which everything is possible, even easy.

Second Point.—"Labour while it is light, lest the darkness surprise you"—To labour alas! The will is not enough; we must have power. Now no one has the power if light is wanting. "Qui ambulat in tenebris nescit quo vadat." "He who walketh in darkness, knoweth not whither he goeth." "Sine me nihil potestis facere." "Without Me you can do nothing." It is the Light of the world Who speaks thus; hence no time is so favourable for labouring for our perfection as the time of retreat, for then the uncreated and eternal Light pours into our calm and rested souls not only in streams, but in torrents. In these divine rays we see more, we see better, and above all, we see further and higher. Beyond time and space, we see revealed the Adorable and Delightful Trinity, offering Itself in the Eternal years to one who has given himself to Him in the short years here below. And this sight of faith and love throws a new light on every act of our life. This extraordinary light of a retreat is, therefore, a really choice grace, is it not? Assuredly so. But as such it is a transient grace. When He wills, God lights and extinguishes this torch which, once extinguished, cannot be relight-

ed by any effort of ours. Yes, after the retreat we will be in darkness, at least in comparison with the extraordinary light which we shall enjoy during this time of solitude. If the work which we should accomplish during these holy days is not done, how shall we do it afterwards? "Qui ambulat in tenebris nescit quo vadit." Let us labour, therefore, to know ourselves, to purify ourselves, to see where we stand while it is day. And let us make haste, let us not lose a moment lest spiritual darkness, dryness, disgust, temptations, surprise us and prevent us from labouring. Perhaps it is the last time this light will shine for me? Have not several of those who made these meditations last year departed this life? Did they think at the time that they were making their last retreat? If they had known, how would they have made it? This is how I should and will make mine, O My Beloved, loving Thee and praying to Thee, as if, at the close of these holy exercises, I were to appear before Thy Supreme Tribunal. May I, by my fidelity, my sincere repentance and my ardent love during these holy days, make Thee forget all the faults of my past life. I will endeavour to do this immediately. Whether I die or live after this retreat, I will, at any cost, make it a good and holy one so as to prepare to die naturally or mystically and to live a heavenly life on earth or in Paradise.

If I am to die soon, is it too much to devote the few days that remain to Thy Love. If I am to live longer, I must prepare to live holily.

"Nec cuiquam sibi, sed omnibus esse vivendum." "We do not live for self alone, but for all." (St. Bernard). So it is not for myself alone but also for souls that I am making this retreat. I must purify myself in order to purify them;

sanctify myself in order to sanctify them; lift myself up to lift them up. If I were on their level, how could I lift them up?

Therefore I will change; I am determined to do so. I will mount as high as I can with Thy grace. O Jesus, even if I have to crush underfoot my inclinations, my repugnances, my views and my dearest affections. I will ascend whilst in the light of the retreat I see the steps to climb, lest darkness surround me and prevent me from seeing those steps which lead to Thee, lest my feet slip and I fall into tepidity and perhaps sin. I wish to mount to Thee, O My dear Lord, but hold out Thy Hand to me. Draw me to Thee and we shall run to the odour of Thy ointments. "Trahe me; post te curremus in odorem unguentorum tuorum." (Cant. I., 4).

FIRST DAY

COUNSEL.

On this first day it is extremely necessary to watch over all our senses, interior and exterior, in order to secure that perfect recollection so favourable for Divine communications. To-morrow, and the day after, we shall have less to do. We shall have advanced further into the spiritual desert; the noise of the world will no longer reach us. But to-day, all our endeavour must be to place ourselves, or rather to fasten ourselves in the interior retreat, to which God calls us. We risk the loss of the whole retreat when we lose the first day. We cannot realize how important it is from the very beginning to watch over ourselves, to deny ourselves every useless, and even unnecessary word, look and thought. If we are generous enough to do so we will be rewarded by a great facility in prayer and in all the exercises of the retreat, and especially by stronger light, more powerful and more efficacious graces.

If consolations are not given us, God will give us what, perhaps, is worth more: strength to bear generously "His apparent coldness."

This particular pleasure which we experience in retreat, and which I cannot define, but which I call "the unction of the retreat," will be stronger, sweeter and more penetrating. Courage, then, and generosity to-day; with to-day's efforts we purchase the sweetness of all the others. Let us give "ours" to-day, God will give us "His" during the rest of the retreat.

FIRST MEDITATION.

End of Man.

"Notum fac mihi, Domine, finem meum, ut sciam quid desit mihi." "O Lord make me to know my end, that I may know what remaineth unto me." Ps. xxxviii., 5.

1st Point.—This prayer of the Royal Prophet should be continually on our lips, for verily nothing is so important here below as to know our end. Whence do we come? Whither are we going? Wherefore are we in this world? This is the capital question of this life, one which we must ask and re-ask ourselves continually during these days of salvation.

What have we to do here below, if not the Will of Him who sent us? Being infinitely wise, and Wisdom itself, God cannot act without an object. What object had He in view in creating us? What was His end in drawing us out of nothing? In a word: "Why did God create us and place us in this world?"

"God created us and placed us in this world to know, love and serve Him, and by this means to gain eternal life," the Catechism says. This is the wherefore of our existence; eternal life! And to attain this life of glory: (1) knowledge, (2) love, (3) service of God. Therefore we are not of this world; this is a strange land where we have been placed for a time by God, a very short time, a time which without our knowing it, may come to an end during this year, during this retreat.

How have I hitherto striven to attain this end? Have I really and only done that for which God created me? Am I going towards my end? On

the contrary have I not, often, imitated the foolish voyager, who, forgetting the end of the voyage, walks at random, without thinking of where he is going, and leaves to chance the end for which he started? Ah! I forget whither I am going! What extravagence! What folly and unhappiness! We absolutely must remedy this folly.

In these days especially we are wearing ourselves out searching for new means, new methods of perfection.

We will never find any more efficacious than frequently pondering this question, the only important one: "Why did God create me and place me in this world?" If I were really penetrated with this fundamental truth: "I was made for God and only for God," my thoughts would not turn so frequently to the world and its trifles! My heart would not become so easily attached to creatures who were also made for God alone; I would not desire to gain the affection of my sisters, nor of the children to the detriment of what they owe to God. "Render to God the things that are God's," I would say to everyone. Now, we are all God's, so let us render all to God, wholly and unreservedly.

"I confess to my shame, O my Saviour, that I have too often forgotten this question of my Catechism, dreaming all the while of a sublime perfection. I wanted to build, but forgot to lay the foundations; I walked, but forgot whither I was going. I taught wisdom to others and I was the most foolish of creatures. The only thing that I should have known aud taught and which I desire to know and teach henceforth, is that we exist only "to know Thee, to love Thee, to serve Thee, and by this means to attain eternal life." All knowledge that does not relate to this point

is vain. In future I desire to know, love and serve Thee alone, O my God."

2nd Point.—"God created us and put us in this world to know Him." If we knew! If we knew God! Not as He is in Himself (that is impossible) but as far as human intelligence permits! If we knew His goodness, His beauty, His sanctity, His mercy, His love for us! Oh, how vile and contemptible everything around us would appear! How indifferent we would be to the things of earth and how little curiosity we would have with regard to its vain sciences!

If we knew God and His incomprehensible love for souls, oh! how ours would be inflamed with zeal to gain Him those whom He has entrusted to us, and to unite those who already serve Him still more closely to Him!

If we knew God and His tender compassion for sinners, how kind and indulgent we would be to hearts, wounded by sin!

God made us to know Him; our first duty, therefore, is to learn Him, to study Him until we know Him "by heart," yes, "by heart" rather than by understanding. We learn better and more quickly what we love. The heart is the best of teachers. "It sharpens the intellect," says Mgr. Gay. Alas! we are not very curious with regard to this knowledge of God. And yet it is the first and only thing necessary. "Haec est autem vita aeterna, ut cognoscant te, solum Deum verum, et quem misisti Jesum Christum." "This is eternal life, and they should know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent," says the Apostle of charity.

Where and how do we learn this science? In the school of silence and prayer; less by the study of what the most enlightened and holiest men

have written, than by humble, serious and profound study of the exterior works of God, of His providential guidance of His chosen people and of all men, of the great mysteries of Religion and especially by constant application to contemplating in spirit the life and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, our Heavenly Spouse. This Divine Saviour came upon earth to make us know God, His Father. We had forgotten the end of our journey, He came to remind us of it, presenting it to our view under the veil of His adorable humanity. This is the reason why the assiduous meditation of the Gospel is the fruitful source of this science, the only indispensable one: the science of God. "How," exclaims Fr. Gatry, "can we understand how a man should not prefer to meditate on the words of Christ rather than anything else? How can we understand that the gospel is not the first of books for every man of heart and for every one who thinks?"

In this Divine Book we learn God, His spirit, His thoughts, His judgments and especially His Heart. Yes, His Heart, so full of love for His poor creature. His heart with its irresistible inclinations to mercy and to pardon. Ah, if we knew God, how we should love Him. Our great wrong, like our great misfortune, is not knowing Him. Even we who are His Spouses do not know Him, and yet our fourth vow places us under a rigorous obligation to reveal Him to souls. Who, then, better than we, should excel in this sublime and unique knowledge? "Noverim te! Noverim me! O My God that I may know Thee and know myself!" I shall exclaim incessantly with our holy Father St. Augustine. Reveal Thyself to me during this retreat, show Thyself to my soul. But Thou revealest Thyself, Thou showest Thyself,

Thou dost speak to me continually: It is I who am blind and deaf. Open my eyes and ears that I may see and hear Thee. Heaven and earth and all they contain will not cease to reveal to me Thy perfections and to tell me to love Thee. "Coelum et terra, et omnia quae in eis sunt, non cessant mihi dicere ut amem Deum meum!"

Third Point.—"God created us and placed us in this world to love Him." Ah, if we knew God, how easy, natural and sweet it would be for us to love Him. How little detachment from all things would cost us. After being favoured with a vision of Our Lord, St. Teresa found herself so inflamed with Divine love that she laughed heartily at the fears of some of her Confessors with regard to her attachment to them.

"They did not know," she said, "my detachment from creatures!" What is this little creature to one who knows God? Doubtless as an author has said, man is made to love, as a bird is made to fly. Everything reveals it to us—it is our need, our imperious necessity, our life in a word. All our time is spent in seeking something to love. Fools! What are we seeking here below? It is God that we must love. It is He Whom our hearts seek. It was for this that He created us.

In the Eternity, anterior to creation, God lived alone in Himself. By a single glance, He encompasses the Infinity of His being and of His perfections. He contemplates all that He is with inexpressible joy. He loves all that He contemplates and with what love. He unites Himself to all that He loves, and what a union! By an Eternal and mighty act, He is devoted and united to Himself, in the unity of His Essence and the Trinity of His person; and this act constitutes a

happiness which satiates Him: Him the Infinite. But see (humanly speaking) how He seems to hunger to be loved by other selves and outside of Himself. What does He do? He creates man to the image of His divinity with a heart capable of loving and expects to be the object of His love. Do you see we exist only to love God. What a noble end! What glory and what happiness! Yes, I have been created by love, in love and for love, My God, My Father and my Creator. Must not I, a child of Love, be love, all love and nothing but love for Thee, O God, my Only Love, Yes, henceforth I desire to fulfil my end, O God of Love. I consecrate every moment of my life to loving Thee and making Thee loved. I shall answer Love with love. But how can I, a poor little creature, love Thee, O My God! "To love Jesus," says Father Badet, "is to possess Him in one's self and behold Him there with the eyes of ardent faith, to feel Him in one's innermost heart, to feel Him living and acting there; it is to converse with Him every moment—a delightful, affectionate and life-giving conversation; it is to live by Him, to be nourished by His most pure Substance, to be guided by His Light, to act under His direct inspiration; in a word, it is to make within one's self an ever-growing place for Him and in a manner substitute Him for self so that He may be all and we nothing. Then He reigns, He commands, He triumphs. An absolute peace succeeds endless agitation and a delightful joy follows inexpressible sadness. So long as Divine love has not reached these depths, it is superficial, weak. Jesus has only entered the vestibule of the soul and the soul knows only the exterior amiabilities of Jesus; there is not intimate union, total fusion. There remains a void within the soul and something unknown in the

interior of Jesus. Only a faith which pierces every cloud accompanied by a desire which overthrows every obstacle, can set out on the path of perfect love. We should love Jesus in view of the supernatural blessings of which He is the source here upon earth and in Heaven. The honour of belonging to His invisible Kingdom, the joy of partaking of His mystical Banquet, the happiness of possessing Him in the secret of conscience; such are the only motives which should lead us to Him. Then He comes to us ready and willing to pour out the treasures of His Heart upon us."

Should not we, Daughters of the Mother of fair Love, be deeply penetrated with this savoury doctrine. Should we not make our soul a kingdom perfectly submissive to holy love? Let us die; yes, let us die rather than not live a life all love! Love or death! Or rather death and love; death to all this is not love, to all that is not the work of the most ardent love! Why should I live if I do not fulfil my end, which is love? "Vita nostra dilectio est," says our Holy Father, St. Augustine. Our life is love: And at the beginning of our Rule, "Above all things, dear Sisters, let God be loved."

SECOND MEDITATION.

Same Subject.

"Notum fac mihi, Domini, finem meum, ut sciam quid desit mihi." "O Lord, make me to know mine end, that I may know what remaineth unto me." Ps. xxxviii., 5.

First Point 3. "God created us to serve Him." If we love God, we must and we will necessarily serve Him. Love has to act upon its object. This

is a necessity so indispensable to it that Mgr. Gay has said: "Love reduced to inaction would be love upon a rack." Yes, devotedness springs from true love as naturally as the fruit from the flowers! Which of us has not felt herself athirst with devotedness in presence of a cherished friend, has not felt a devouring hunger to give something, then something more, then to give her everything and finally to give herself by spending and immolating herself for her?

Ah! as St. Thomas says, "Love is the first of all gifts and the source of every other." When we have offered this gift the others soon follow. And would we venture to say that we love God when we are doing nothing or almost nothing for Him? To say it would be a lie, to believe it, an illusion and a misfortune! Ah! if we loved Him, this great God, how eager we would be to serve Him, to sacrifice ourselves for His glory! A delightful and holy passion which only the immolation of our whole being could satiate!

The Religious of Our Lady of Charity, more than any other, should make her love consist in a never-ceasing devotedness; for her, to love God is to labour to make Him loved; to serve God is to spend herself in inducing others to serve Him. For her especially, love cannot be real unless it is active and acting upon the souls whom she should offer to God as the fruits of her charity.

"God does not recognize His Saints by frivolous signs. He wants *Works* not *Words*.

"Love has a passion to serve, and love alone can do as it does." (Mgr. Gay). What matter to it the nature, manner, time and place of this service? All these details are nothing to it; provided it is labouring for its object, it is content.

Moreover, the honour and happiness of serving

a God infinitely, amiable and passionately loved, are really worth a few little sacrifices! Now, the greatest sacrifices are small to a soul, inflamed with love; for me, then, a member of a religious family whose spirit is pre-eminently a spirit of love, all sacrifices should be small, all trials slight, according to the words of our holy legislator: "Where there is love there is no labour, or if there is labour the labour is love."

Second Point.—To devote one's self to the service of God for love alone is the noblest motive and the one most worthy of God and man. However, there are other reasons on which it would be well for us to meditate, and which, also, are of a nature to enkindle the fires of love within us. "Our whole life," says Blessed Father Eudes, "with all that belongs to it, all that depends upon it, belongs to Jesus Christ by five general titles which include an infinite number of particular ones: 1. Because He is our Creator, who has given us being and life, and who has imprinted in our being and life an image and resemblance of His life and His being; for this reason our life and our being belong to Him absolutely and entirely in all their acts, and should bear a constant resemblance to Him, as the image to its prototype."

"2. Because He is our Preserver who constantly sustains us in the existence He has given us and who bears us unceasingly in His arms with greater care and love than a mother bears her child."

"3. Because, according to the Divine Word, God the Father has given to His Son from all Eternity, gives incessantly and will give eternally, all creation in general and each of us in particular."

"4. Because He is our Redeemer, who has delivered us from the slavery of Satan and sin, who has redeemed us with His Blood and His Life, and consequently has gained possession of all that is in us, all that comes from us, i.e., all our life, all our time, all our thoughts, words and actions, all that belongs to our body and to our soul, the use of our bodily senses and spiritual powers; as also, all the use we make of exterior things. For He has merited by His Blood, not only all the graces necessary for the sanctification of our souls, but also all that is necessary for the preservation of our bodies. As a consequence of our sins, we had lost all right to set foot on the ground, to breathe, to eat, to drink a single drop of water or to receive the least service from any creature. Jesus Christ had to win back this right for us by His Blood and His Death. "This is why our whole interior, our whole exterior, and all that is our use, belongs to Jesus Christ and should be employed only for Him, as something which He has purchased with His Life."

"5. Because Jesus Christ has given us all that He has, all that He is, and has given us His Father to be our Father and has made us adopted children of Him whose only Son He is. He has given us His Spirit to be our spirit, to teach us, to govern and direct us in all things. He has given us His own Mother to be our Mother. He has given us His Angels and Saints to be our protectors and intercessors. He has given us all that He is in Heaven and on earth for our use and our needs. He has given us His own person in His Incarnation. He has given us His whole life; not a single moment that was not spent for us; not a thought, a word, an action that was not consecrated to our salvation. Lastily, He has given us in the Holy

Eucharist, His Body, His Blood, His Soul, His Divinity with all its marvels, all the infinite treasures which His Divinity and Humanity contain; and that, every day, or at least as often as we wish to prepare to receive Him.

"If this is so, are we not obliged to give ourselves wholly to Jesus Christ, to offer and consecrate to Him every moment and act of our life? If we had at our disposal the lives of all the Angels, of all the men who have been, are and will ever be, we ought to spend them in His service, even if He had only spent a single instant of His Life for us; for a single moment of the Life of the Man-God is worth more than a thousand eternities, if I may use the expression, of all the Angels and of all men. Are we not, therefore, obliged, I ask you again, to employ the little life and time we are to spend upon earth, in His service and for His glory?"

Could we, my dear Sisters, after these words of Our Blessed Founder, be so blind and so miserable as to consider that we still belong to ourselves? God has done too much for us, we have cost Him too dear! Yes, we are really His! We are His property and possession.

Take me, O my God, and dispose of me according to Thy good pleasure; do what Thou wilt with Thine own property. I confess and acknowledge Thy sovereign dominion over me. Forgive me, I beseech Thee, O my God, for having ignored it and revenge Thyself upon me for having usurped Thy rights. Take possession of me so fully that nothing of what is within me or of me may be mine. All Thine, nothing mine! All to All, nothing to nothing!

THIRD MEDITATION.

The End of the Religious.

"Audivi vocem de coelo dicentem mihi: 'Beati mortui qui in Domino moriuntur.' 'Ad majorem Dei Gloriam.'"

"I heard a voice from Heaven saying: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.' 'For the Greater Glory of God.'"

First Point.—The glory of God: This is the end of the creation of the visible and invisible world, the end of each particular soul. So is it also the end of the creation of Religious Orders, the end which every consecrated soul should earnestly seek. But as she is in a more perfect state, God expects to receive a higher degree of glory from her. And if this soul is intelligent, she will realize that she must employ more perfect, higher means, and hence those most contrary to nature; she will realize that her life must be a "death" to all that does not tend directly to the glory, to the greater glory of God.

This is what our holy Mother, the Church, endeavours to inculcate in us, when, on the day of our profession, she bids us prostrate under the mortuary pall and sings over us the "Libera" and all the prayers for the dead, then says, "My Sister, you are now dead to the world—and to yourself—that henceforth you may live to God alone in solitude like that of the tomb."

"You are dead to the world!" Yes, these words were really true on the day I became the Spouse of Jesus. At that moment I was dead to the world, at least in my will and determination. My whole ambition was "to live hidden" in God in solitude as in a tomb. Where are the

fruits of those ardent desires and of those fervent resolutions? Have I always realized the full significance of these words? "Now, you are dead to the world and to yourself." "Now—i.e., right now." "Now and henceforth." Now and forever as at that very moment: You are dead.

Has this always been true? Are you dead to the world—to its joys and honours, to its praise and blame, to its opinions and judgments; to the satisfactions and comforts of life, to friendships and affections founded on flesh and blood? Are you as dead to creatures as a dead person is to everything around him? Are we not more anxious than the dead with regard to the sayings and doings of the world? They have no care for the men who move around their dwellings where nothing can disturb their peace and tranquility. Is it so with you? Is your house a tomb? Your cell a coffin? "You are dead to the world," i.e., to all those whom you have left there: father, mother, brothers, sisters, relatives, friends? You remember them no more than the dead remember theirs; that is to recommend them to God and abandon them to the care of His Providence?

You are dead to the world, and does the world know it? Can it bear witness to your mystical death? When they come to see you do they believe that you will be as insensible to their esteem as to their contempt, that their compliments will leave you as cold as their insults? Do they not come to your house as to a tomb only to pray (or at least to learn or think of praying); to weep or think of weeping over their strange blindness, to recall the brevity and vanity of life, the necessity of thinking of eternity of which everything in you reminds them?

Ah! how necessary it is for me to be "dead

to the world!'' How far removed I am from the detachment which my holy profession demands? After having walked for a long time I find myself at my starting-point! Or rather I have not walked at all, or am walking backwards. And now, what must I do? I certainly do not want to recoil; God forbid; I cannot stay as I am any longer; of necessity, then, I must go forward and, to do that, I must die ''to the world,'' and to all that is of the world. Strengthen and bless this resolution, O Divine Heart of my Jesus, for how shall I inspire the souls entrusted to me with contempt of the world and its vanities if I do not possess it perfectly myself?''

These children are watching me closely; they can discern the real feelings of their mistresses (experience proves it) and the most eloquent exhortation we can give them is that of example. Woe to me, if instead of making them detest the world, I make them love it by retaining something of its manners in my exterior, something of its spirit in my interior; what good could my instructions and counsels do them if my conduct gives them the lie!

To despist the world is therefore an indispensable necessity for me and a rigorous duty. Grant me this grace, O my Jesus, I ask it of Thy Sacred Heart in the name of the great desire Thou hast for my perfection and for the salvation of souls.

Second Point.—''You are dead to the world and to yourself.''—To die ''to the world'' is a possible thing, nay, an easy one, to a certain point, for souls who, in the light of God, have seen its corruption, folly and nothingness. For some chosen souls this death is an imperious and de-

lightful necessity; the world disgusts them. But to die to self is not so easy nor so well understood. The souls most obliged to this death by their profession and their loving pursuit of God do not understand, or rather, very often will not understand, either its necessity, its nature or its marvellous fruits.

Then, what is this death which frightens the bravest? What does dying to one's self mean?

To die to one's self is to deny, renounce and constantly and manfully oppose all the desires, inclinations and wills of the "human I," it is always to go contrary to our evil nature and act in a manner contrary to the views and lights of one's own mind, when duty or obedience demands it; in a word, it is to die to all that is no longer "we" in ourselves every time the glory of God requires it. This is death to self, and I must know it since it is a necessity for me. There is no question of asking myself if it is difficult since it is "necessary, indispensable." We do not reason with necessity, we submit, and rightly so. If I am logical and consistent then I should ardently will and desire this blessed death which is a duty as well as a blessing for me. (Here it would be well to meditate on what Blessed J. Eudes teaches us about death to self. (Vie et Roy). II. part, Art. 4).

One is really dead to self only when she has no longer any natural life, nor personal action, nor self-will, nor fear, nor earthly desires, at least deliberate ones; she who constantly forgets herself, loses and abandons herself to God in all that concerns her natural and supernatural life; she who is in the hands of God and her superiors, like a corpse without will or resistance.

Alas! how often self-love, vain fears and secret desires warn me that I am still alive to self.

Doubtless, it is very hard to die to this "me" which is so much "myself." But if I had generously and constantly practised it since my consecration to God, I would not now be so sensible to everything that wounds my pride and self-love. It is very late, but there is still time to begin this work. Yes, my Jesus, I desire henceforth to endeavour to die to all that is not Thee.

Death to pride, sensitiveness and esteem; to honour and reputation! Death to my whole self! I desire to die that Jesus may live in me: He must live by my death. And the degree of this death will be the degree of the life of my God in my soul, and of the life of my soul in Him! Death to the world and to myself! Life to Thee alone, O my Beloved, O my Life! Life and death will henceforth be my life!

Third Point.—"You are dead to the world and to yourself that, henceforth you may life to God alone in solitude, like that of the tomb."—To be dead to the least sins and voluntary imperfections; to the world and all exterior things; to immoderate care of the body; to natural defects of character; to self-will, self-esteem and self-love; is to be living to God alone. This death and this life are very high perfection; but why did I enter religion, if not to become more holy and more perfect than the most holy and perfect people in the world! I must, then, "live to God alone"; and first of all I must fly, isolate myself interiorly from the world, from creatures, from exterior objects; then establish myself in God, to dwell in Him by a simple and loving, continual or at least habitual, remembrance of His Divine Presence, so that this sweet Saviour may be the

principal, or rather, the only object of my thoughts, my affections, my acts, both interior and exterior.

"In ipso vivimus et movemur et sumus." "In Him we live and move and have our being," says the Apostle. If I am truly Thy Spouse, My God, what is more delightful to me than to meditate on these words? To live in God, as the fish lives in water! To be surrounded and penetrated by Him as the sponge is by the sea! To move, toil and rest in Him! To breathe Him in the air I breathe, eat Him in the food I eat, touch Him in every object I touch! To feel His Divine essence permeate my whole being and the whole Trinity take possession of my soul to its very depths; is this not all the happiness possible here below, and a foretaste of the unspeakable bliss of Heaven?

Would I be so foolish as to leave this divine atmosphere where everything is delightful, to return to the poisinous atmosphere of the world and self?

In one of his homilies, St. Macarius the Ancient, speaks of certain sheep living on mountains which send forth fire in all directions. "This fire," he says, "serves them as food and preserves their life; far from burning their wool, it serves only to make it whiter and removes every stain. Lastly, these sheep live on those flames and in those flames, so that they die as soon as they are removed to another place."

A beautiful image of souls consecrated to God, and especially of the Religious of Our Lady of Charity. They also live on mountains which send forth in all directions the divine and vivifying flames in which they find their food and their happiness, their strength and their purity!

This fire of love is the divine air which we

must breathe incessantly and which we cannot leave without dying! "Deus noster ignis consumens est." "Grant that I may live in Thee, O consuming Fire, be my dwelling place and my happy tomb for time and eternity! Let worldlings delight in living in splendid palaces, my delight is to dwell in Thee, O my God, a mountain of fire and sanctity! And why may I not share this happiness with all the souls whom Thou hast entrusted to me!

Yes, I would like to make everyone understand that out of Thee, O my God, there is naught but illusion and chagrin! Oh! how foolish the world is to believe that there are only trials where all is joy and delight, and to seek happiness where there is only misery. O blind and foolish world, learn now at last; happiness is God, and God alone! Come to Him; taste and see—soon you will be disgusted forever with your dull pleasures and frivolous joys.

O dear Saviour, how happy I would be to suffer all imaginable torments if at that price I could bring back to Thee so many souls for whom Thou didst shed Thy adorable Blood!

CONSIDERATION.

Which May Be Used As Spiritual Reading.

The End of the Religious of Our Lady of Charity.

The general intention of the Religious of Our Lady of Charity in their whole life and all their exercises ought to be to unite themselves with God and Holy Church in order to labour zealously for the salvation of their neighbour.—(Const. Wishes of our Bl. Founder).

First.—In Religion nothing is so important as to know the end we had in view in entering and the "special" obligation we have taken on ourselves. Independently of the general end, that pursued by all Religious, viz.: the greater glory of God, a higher personal sanctity, each Congregation has, in addition, a particular end for which it was founded. The peculiar end of the Order of Our Lady of Charity is to unite with Jesus in His state as Shepherd and to imitate Him in His burning charity and ardent zeal in seeking out "the lost sheep of the House of Israel." Each of us should say with this Divine Saviour, "I have come not to call the just, but sinners." "Non veni vocare justos, sed peccatores."

The spirit of our Apostolic vocation is contained in these words which our Bl. Founder addresses to us at the beginning of our Constitutions: "The general intention of the Religious of Our Lady of Charity in their whole life and all their exercises ought to be to unite themselves with God and Holy Church in order to labour zealously for the salvation of their neighbour." To labour for the salvation of souls, to glorify Him, is what God has predestined and called me for from all Eternity, appointing a place for me in the Order of Our Lady of Charity. "God doubtless wills all that He does," says Mgr. Gay, "but He does it with an end in view and hence this end is what He wants first and most of all."

Like creation, our vocation is for Him only a means of attaining this end. His own exterior glory, which means the full accomplishment of His Eternal designs upon the world and souls, and as a result, the perfection, the glorious beatitude and consummation in it of all the beings that

He created. Nothing can compare with the energy with which God desires this end. Now, this end which God desires so much is also the one which we should, above all, will and pursue in our vocation as Daughters of Our Lady of Charity. This end, which is general for all, becomes particular for us by reason of our fourth Vow.

To labour for the salvation of souls is the work to which I consecrated myself when I joined this Congregation; this is my "raison d'etre" in this House; it is the general intention of my whole life and the means by which I am to attain perfection myself. Hence to save souls should be my constant pre-occupation. For me to labour at anything else would be not to labour at all, but to lose my time and turn aside from my end.

And I must labour for the salvation of souls zealously, i.e., with ardour, love, fire, I should almost say passionately.

Alas, my labour is nothing, even if performed zealously and with good intention, if I labour by myself. "Without Me you can do nothing." "Sine me nihil potestis facere." My talents, industry and good-will will be deplorably fruitless if I labour without Jesus. I am an inert instrument, and unless worked by the Divine Workman, I am completely useless.

Therefore, before telling us for what end we should strive, our Blessed Founder recommends us to "unite ourselves with God and Holy Church." I should, therefore, unite myself with God in mind and heart, in order to labour for the salvation of souls with the dispositions of the Divine Shepherd who should have part in all I do. I should unite myself with Holy Church, always following her views and intentions. I must always teach and reprove, exhort and labour, suffer and pray with my Spouse, Jesus, and with

my Holy Mother, the Church. This union with Jesus and the Church is my strength and my security, my hope and my glory; it alone will make my humble apostolate fruitful.

What thanksgiving should we not offer to our Great God! He has need of no one and He deigns to call us to co-operate with Him in the salvation of souls. On her death-bed, Mother Patin, probably by a supernatural inspiration, exclaimed with rapture to the first mothers of our Order who stood around her deathbed: "Ah! Daughters of Charity, to what great things you are called. Since God wishes to take pleasure in you, do you also take pleasure in Him. Be faithful to your observances, labour efficaciously for the salvation of souls and you will experience the greatness of His Miseries! Miracle! Miracle of grace on the little House of Charity."

II.

Means of attaining our end: (1) fervour, (2) good example—what good will it do to know the end to be atttained, if we are ignorant of the means by which we are to attain it? Every end necessarily demands means; and whoever wills the end wills the means. Before giving us our Constitutions, Our Blessed Founder teaches us that the first means of saving souls is fervour in our prayers. Whatever may be our employment, our vocation is always the same and our principal intention should not change. We are not permitted to adopt another without ceasing to belong to the spiritual family of Our Lady of Charity.

If my occupations do not bring me to labour directly for the salvation of souls, I have, in prayer, a means which is worth all the rest and assures their success. So my first duty is "to labour for

the salvation of souls by the fervour of my prayers."

Not an Ave Maria, an inspiration, a sigh, a glance heavenward, not a prayer, not a word which should not have for its final aim the salvation of our neighbour.

Have I, hitherto, understood this necessity of prayer? A necessity for every Christian soul, probably, but doubly so for me, by reason of my fourth vow, because prayer is the commonest, the easiest and the most powerful means of reaching souls.

Experience shows that those among us who are not in direct contact with souls are frequently apt to become disinterested; if they do not forget that they are religious, they too often forget that they are Religious of "Our Lady of Charity."

Being wholly occupied with their own sanctification, they neglect a very important part of it by not thinking sufficiently of procuring that part of our adopted children; and the prayers we say for others sanctify us perhaps more than those we say for ourselves.

However, it may be, to make our life an incessant prayer for the salvation of souls, is a duty from which nothing in the world can dispense us. We can lay aside our other obligations for lawful reasons; but from this, no motive, not even that of illness, can dispense us, because it is always possible to pray, if not vocally, at least in desire and disposition.

The second means at our disposal of labouring for the salvation of souls is good example, i.e., the example of a virtue, solid and serious, amiable and simple, the very sight of which speaks of God and of the happiness of serving Him. If it is not given to all to instruct and teach, at least

they may, and should, instruct and teach by example. "Examples is the most eloquent of sermons," says an author; it is also the most persuasive.

Woe to me if, instead of edifying by my example, I destroy what the mistresses effect at the cost of so much suffering and labour. What should I not do so as to let them perceive in me nothing but virtue and sanctity; God, in a word, God living and acting in me, inspiring and animating all my actions? My virtue should be such that when going to the classes I may be able to say with St. Francis of Assissi going through the city, "Let us go and preach."

Have I always preached thus, hitherto? Is the mere sight of me a sermon, an exhortation to virtue? Perhaps, on the contrary, I have frequently given bad example to souls whom I should edify? O my God, forgive me and change me.

III.

"Especially by the exact observance of their Fourth Vow," should the Religious of Our Lady of Charity labour for the salvation of souls.

"Especially," says our Blessed Founder, i.e., while employing the general means inspired by piety and zeal, we should be particularly attached, with an ardour equal to our love for God, "to the exact observance of our fourth vow."

Mark well this word, "exact," i.e., precise and regular, punctual and minute, diligent and free from error. Without these qualities the observance of our rules cannot be regarded as "exact."

"Therefore, they ought to have nothing so

much at heart as to be so good and holy, that the sweet odour of their holiness, whilst it pleases Almighty God, may diffuse itself everywhere among the faithful." (Constitution).

When words are just, we have only to examine them to form an exact idea of the realities they express. "They ought!" How strong and energetic, how precise and formal, are these words! We feel that it is a master who is speaking and prescribing a duty (a duty whose elevation and extent equals its beauty and dignity). Our duty is "to have nothing so much at heart as to be so good and holy that the sweet odour of our holiness, whilst it pleases Almighty God, may diffuse itself everywhere among the faithful." What an obligation! How holy we should be! Have we ever weighed these words carefully? They do not leave us free to desire anything whatever so much as this virtue, this sanctity, "the good odour of which, whilst it pleases Almighty God, may diffuse itself among the faithful." And there is question here, not only of the souls around us who must be edified by our example, but of "all the faithful." Does it not frequently happen that a pleasant odour strikes our sense of smell, without our being able to recognize whence it comes? Still, we enjoy it. Besides, in the garden of Holy Church, each of us should be the flower, hidden and lost among the others or perhaps even among the thorns; the sweet flower whose superior perfume predominates above that of all the others which are frequently credited with this delicious perfume.

Let us exhale the odour of virtue, the sanctity, the odour of Jesus Christ, in a word, but without worrying whether or not it is attributed to us. God sees,—God knows,—that suffices! Pro-

vided the perfume be strong enough, perceptible enough, and sweet enough to make them desire and seek the first and only Flower, Jesus, the Splendour of the Father, as the flower is the splendour of the field, it suffices, let us be content.

"To labour for the salvation of souls." This is, therefore, for me the intention which should be mother and mistress of all the others, my peculiar end, and my special aim. Everything in me and of me belongs to this intention; I am here only for souls and to spend myself in their service. They have a right to protest if I despoil them of an action, a thought, a desire. Everything in me is theirs because I have given them everything by the enunciation of my fourth Vow. Have I not too often forgotten this debt which I contracted so freely and joyously at the foot of the altar? Have I not frequently acted without considering it? During this retreat I must penetrate myself anew with this first intention, engrave it deeply in my mind and especially in my heart, so that thence it may pass into my actions.

SECOND DAY

FIRST MEDITATION.

Mortal Sin.

"Unus ex vobis diabolus est"—
"One of you has a devil." John xvi., 71.

First Point.—Those who, by grace and participation, were gods, become, by resemblance and imitation, demons," says Bl. Father Eudes. Such is the work of sin; of a god it makes a demon.

What horror should the very name of mortal sin inspire in a soul who loves God! Is it necessary to meditate on a subject so abominable in my eyes? Have I not long since sworn implacable hatred to this enemy of My God and of my happiness? But what am I saying? Can we hate it too much? Can we even hate it enough?

In this meditation, therefore, I will enkindle within my soul a great hatred and horror of this infernal monster; I will renew my courage in combating it in myself and others.

"I know," says St. Theresa, "I know a person to whom Our Lord revealed the state of a soul that has fallen into mortal sin, and this person told me that she believed that if people fully realized it, no one would be so foolhardy as to fall into such a wretched state, whatever trouble he might find in avoiding its occasions.

Sin turns the soul away from its end. It was created for God; sin turns it over to the demon. Sin darkens its understanding and prevents it from experiencing the beauty of God and of vir-

tue, so that it sees only a transient and deceiving, a gross and degrading pleasure. The soul is created to love God, to love but Him in all things; by sin, it hates Him, selling itself to the demon whom it prefers.

O My God, my mind recoils with horror from such thoughts and refuses to dwell upon them. Is it possible that reasonable creatures could be capable of such folly. Are their hearts really so hard and depraved as thus to grieve Thine? "O My God, forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

The soul is destined to serve God; this is the end of its creation; by sin it refuses Him the service from which God Himself cannot dispense it and freely enters the service of His most implacable enemy. Fool! What reward will it receive? It thinks to seek its happiness; it flies from it and pursues only its Eternal misery. "Tribulation and anguish will come upon the soul of every man that worketh evil."

O My Good Jesus, how I suffer at seeing Thee so despised, loved so little, served so badly and treated so shamefully. Give me tears of blood to weep over all the sins of the world. O God of Love, O Thou so little loved! Ah, I beseech Thee, give me grace to know Thee more intimately, to love Thee more passionately, and to serve Thee more generously so that I may make all the souls around me know Thee more perfectly, love Thee more sincerely and serve Thee more faithfully. I wish to share Thy grief and labour with all my strength to diminish the number of sins which afflict Thee. O My God, let me weep with Thee.

Second Point.—"Look upon sin," says Bl. Father Eudes, "not as men do with carnal and ter-

restial eyes, but as God does and in the light of faith.'' Now, in this light you will see that sin being, in a manner, infinitely contrary to God and infinitely opposed to His Divine perfections, being a privation of an infinite Good which is God, bears within itself a sort of malice, folly and horror as great as the beauty, wisdom and sanctity of God, which are infinite; consequently it should be as much hated and shunned as God should be loved and sought after. In the light of faith, you will see that sin is so horrible, that it could be effaced only by the Blood of a God; so detestable that only the love of a Man-God could destroy it; so abominable that only the annihilation of the Only-Begotten Son of God could annihilate it; so execrable in the sight of God on account of the injury and dishonour He receives from it that it required the labours, sufferings, agony, death and the Blood of a God to repair it worthily.''

''You will see that sin is a cruel homicide, a horrible deicide and the annihilation of every good; it is a homicide since it is the sole cause of the death of man, both of body and of soul; it is a Deicide because by his sins the sinner made Jesus Christ die on the Cross and still crucifies Him daily in His Soul. It is an annihiliation of Nature, Grace and Glory, since it annihiliates in so far as it can the Author of nature, grace and glory. You will also see how detestable sin is in the sight of God since He cast the first and noblest of His creatures, the Angels, from the highest heights of Heaven to the lowest depths of Hell for a single sin of thought, without granting them a single moment to do penance, because He saw they were as unworthy as they were incapable of it. Even now, if at the moment of death, God finds a soul sullied by mortal sin, He is

obliged in justice to pronounce a sentence of Eternal damnation against this miserable soul, although He is All-goodness, All-love for His creature, although He is exceedingly desirous of everyone's salvation for He shed His Blood and gave His life for us."

Can I believe and understand these truths and not combat with a zeal as hard and inflexible as Hell, this cursed sin which has enkindled and still feeds its avenging fires? Where is my love for God, my zeal for His glory, if, like David, I do not pine away with horror at seeing the crimes of men daily increase? It is not enough for me to avoid sin; as a Spouse of My Redeemer, I ought, like My Jesus, to take upon myself all the sins of the world and expiate them in my tears and in my blood. In the Garden of Gethsemane, at the pillar of the Scourging, on the blood-stained path to Calvary, I wish to learn to hate sin truly and practically!

This sight of the Man-God burdened with the sins of the world, made Bl. Father Eudes exclaim: "But what should astonish us still more is that the Eternal Father, seeing His own Beloved and only Son, Sanctity and Innocence Itself, charged with the sins of others, did not spare Him, but gave Him up for us to the death of the Cross; so execrable and abominable is sin in the sight of God."

"You will see, moreover, that sin is so malicious that it changes the servants of God into slaves of the demon, children of God into children of Satan, members of Jesus Christ into members of the demon; "those who by grace and participation were Gods, become by resemblance and imitation demons.

"Lastly, you will learn that sin is the greatest evil, the most terrible misery that inundates the

world and fills Hell; that it is the only evil worthy of the name; that it is more terrible than death, more frightful than the demon, more horrible than Hell for all that is terrible, frightful and horrible in death, the demon and Hell comes from sin.

"O sin, how detestable you are! Oh, if men but knew you. We must say that there is in you a malice more horrible than we can express or imagine since a soul sullied by your corruption can be cleansed and purified only in the Blood of a God and you can be destroyed and annihilated therein only by the death and annihiliation of the Man-God.

"O Great God, I no longer wonder that Thou shouldst hate this infernal monster nor that Thou shouldst punish it so rigorously. Let those wonder who do not know Thee and who do not know what an injury sin does Thee. For, O Lord, Thou wouldst not be God if Thou didst not hate it infinitely; for, being happily obliged to love Thyself infinitely since Thou art Infinite Goodness, Thou art also holily obliged to have an infinite horror of what is infinitely contrary to Thee.

"O you who read these words founded on Eternal Truth, if you will retain a spark of love and zeal for the God Whom you adore, hate what He hates so much and what is so infinitely opposed to Him. Fear and shun sin more than the plague, more than death, more than every imaginable evil. Keep ever in your soul a firm and efficacious resolution to suffer death a thousand times with every imaginable torment rather than be separated from God by a mortal sin."

Such are the sentiments of our Blessed Founder with regard to sin; such ought aud will henceforth be mine, if I am a true Daughter of Our Lady of Charity.

SECOND MEDITATION.

Venial Sin.

"Nolite contristare Spiritum Sanctum."
"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God."

First Point.—We make very little account of venial sin, but if, in the light of faith, we saw it in all its horror, we would think quite differently. However slight it may be, it offends, it wounds God Who is Infinite; it is, therefore, an infinite evil and consequently deserving of infinite hatred. In committing venial sin, I do not kill God, but I offend, I insult Him. I do not crucify Him, but I throw mud and spittle in His Face. Is this no concern of mine? What would I think of a Spouse who would talk in this way: "I love my spouse, for I do not wish to kill him, but I am not very much concerned about sparing him slight wounds or seeing him sad or displeased. To be sure I would be glad to see him always healthy and pleased, but I do not worry much about it nor try hard to please him." Cowardly, heartless creature I would say to anyone who was so cold and indifferent towards her spouse. But would I not be pronouncing my own sentence?

"Nolite contristare Spiritum Sanctum": "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God." If I love My God as a spouse does her beloved, would I not fear to wound, to grieve His Heart, so lovingly tender, by committing venial sin. In doing so I do not break with my Divine Spouse, it is true, but I loosen the sacred bonds that unite us. I make our union less intimate, less familiar, or mutual intercourse less pleasing and less affectionate. Oh, I understand the beautiful saying of Mother Theresa of St. Augustine (Mme. Louise

of France), that noble daughter of our Kings. Seeing her much afflicted over a slight fault, they offered her this strange consolation: "Why, Madame, this fault over which you grieve so deeply is, after all, only a venial sin!" "Do not talk to me about venial sin," she replied, earnestly; "it is venial to God, it is true, but it is mortal to my heart." Thus do all loving and sensible souls think and speak.

The slightest venial sin is so great an evil that nothing can ever authorize me to commit it. If by the smallest lie I could assure the salvation of all the Penitents in our houses, of all our orphans and of all creatures who have, are and will ever exist upon earth, even under such circumstances, I should not tell it because God would be wounded and offended. Even if there were question of procuring for God, by a slight venial sin, all the glory which can be procured for Him (which is impossible) God would not want this glory on such a condition.

However slight the venial sin may be, it sullies the soul and it is of faith that it will never enter with me, nor I with it, into the Kingdom of Heaven, for "nothing defiled can enter therein."

The most beautiful soul, the most perfect, the one richest in merits, if it leaves this world with a single venial sin unexpiated cannot enter Heaven and in the presence of the God of sanctity it conceives such a horror of this stain that it hastens into the flames of Purgatory.

God has often punished it in a terrible manner, even in this world, to make us realize how great an evil it is. To punish David for a simple vanity, a whole nation died. A Levite was struck dead beside the Ark for having, on the impulse of fear, dared to stretch forth his hand to sustain

it. He forbade Moses and Aaron to enter the Promised Land because they doubted for a moment and struck the rock twice.

But lastly, does not the thought of the innumerable and continual benefits of this Loving Father suffice to make us understand the injury and, I will say it, the enormity of the least venial sin? The smaller it is, the less excuse I have for committing it, since it is easier for me to avoid it. If God asked a great deal from me I might, perhaps, allege my weakness, but here, He asks little and I refuse Him. Have I any excuse? It is almost nothing, but God who has infinite claims upon me asks me to sacrifice this trifling pleasure for Him; the demon on his side asks me to sacrifice the repugnance of my conscience. If I yield, the demon may jeer at Our Lord and say: "This soul gives me what she refuses Thee."

"O my God, do not permit me, I beseech Thee, to give the demon an opportunity to speak thus. Let me die a thousand times rather than voluntarily commit the least venial sin."

Second Point.—The malice of venial sin terrifies me; how will it be if I consider how easily they are committed. How often have I fallen into it since my last retreat? Since my entrance into Religion? Since I had the use of reason? Could I count them? Oh I may well say with the Royal Prophet: "Quoniam circumdederunt me mala, quorum non est numerus; comprehenderunt me iniquitates meae, et non potui ut viderem. Multiplicatae sunt super capillos capitis mei, et cor meum dereliquit me": For evils without number have surrounded me and I was not able to see. They are multiplied above the hairs of my head and my heart hath failed me." Ps. 39-13.

God alone knows the number of my faults for how many sins of ignorance, caused by forgetfulness of my duties, my negligence in instructing myself in them, by indocility in receiving admonitions, my pride, my presumption in refusing to believe anyone but myself and in preferring my own opinion to that of others? How many sins of imprudence, of inadvertance caused by my dissipation of mind, my liberty of speech, my rash judgments, my evil suspicions? How many sins of frailty and weakness have I committed by not subjecting myself to any rule, by following my natural inclinations in everything? How many have I committed freely with full knowledge and entire deliberation, on the pretext that it was only a venial sin and hence did not merit Eternal punishment?

O My Jesus, how unworthy such conduct is of a soul consecrated to Thy service and what a proof of culpable coldness to Thee! Have I ever reasoned thus? I hardly think so. If I have ever been so unfortunate and so cowardly, show me on what occasions, O Jesus, My Light. I desire at any cost to repair and expiate my faults and to do my utmost to diminish their number. Alas! Alas! I know it is morally impossible to live without committing some venial sins. Deplorable necessity which caused the Saints to mourn and wrung from them the cry: wretch that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death! "Infelix homo quis me liberabit de corpore mortis hujus!" At least it is not impossible to diminish the gravity and number of my faults; this I will henceforth endeavour to do with the aid of Thy grace, O My God. Yes, I am ready to suffer anything rather than consent to the least venial sin. I will instruct myself and take instruction from

others if need be, in order to avoid sins of ignorance.

2. I will be on my guard against those of imprudence and frivility. 3. I will love Thee, O My God, I will love Thee ardently so as never to commit deliberate sins. 4. As for the sins of frailty which will escape me in spite of my vigilance, I will immediately expiate them by penance. But keep me, O Good Jesus, enfold me in Thy grace, and Thy love, hide me in Thy Sacred Heart so that sin may not touch me.

Third Point.—Consequences of venial sin.—Have we ever thought seriously of the consequences of venial sin? They are of a nature to give us an implacable hatred of it. Oh, how they harm the soul! Venial sin lessens charity, darkens the understanding, strengthens the passions, weakens our zeal for virtue and our power to resist evil and lastly, disposes to mortal sin.

If, on the one hand, the punishment of venial sin is only temporal, are not its consequences eternal? By committing it, I deprive myself of a grace which would have been given me in reward for the effort made to avoid it; when another temptation comes, deprived of this grace which God destined for me and with which I might easily have overcome it, I will perhaps fall again. Will my soul, weakened by this second fall, resist a third and stronger attack, unless by a grace of which I have rendered myself unworthy and to which it has no right, God in His mercy comes to my assistance? Hence, how many merits have I lost forever! True, other occasions of overcoming evil and glorifying God may present themselves; those I have lost will never return. During all Eternity I can say: "If I had avoided such a venial sin, my glory would have been

greater; my happiness more delightful; my love for God more vehement and my union with Him more intimate.

For a great number of the elect, the turning point of their sanctity, whose sublimity and heroism we so admire, has been a resistance to a temptation to venial sin. St. Gertrude, on her way to the chapel, met a religious whom she disliked: "Do not greet her," said her evil nature. But her conscience cried out: "The Rule and Charity." Gertrude thinks of Jesus and inclines graciously to her enemy. She had scarcely entered the chapel and begun to pray when, by a first apparition, Our Saviour inaugurated for her a life-long and divine familiarity.

The turning point for a great number of the reprobate was consent to a venial sin which, ere long, disposed and led them to mortal sin. The path of sin is slippery; he who consents to a venial fault, promising himself that he will go no further, may, without even perceiving it, glide into mortal sin in which he may perhaps die.

O My God, that is enough; I am terrified at the terrible consequences of venial sin. Stop, I pray Thee, the course of my iniquities and their baneful influence. Give me the graces I have lost through my own fault and in order that I may merit them, let me suffer all that Thou pleases. Give me Thy good graces; the ardent charity and the holy familiarity and delightful intercourse that I should have enjoyed with Thee. I have lost all right to them, I acknowledge, but I hope for this favour from the Infinite Goodness of Thy Heart which can pardon more than I can sin.

That tender heart cannot be insensible to the bitter regret I experienced at the memory of so

many infidelities which I would like to expiate in my blood. Henceforth, O My Beloved, I will love Thee. I will hate and kill the very shadow of sin.

THIRD MEDITATION.

The Sin of the Religious of Our Lady of Charity.

"The others are satisfied with attacking My Body, these attack My Heart, which has never ceased to love them."

First Point.—The Sin of Religious in general. —The sin of a Religious is more grave and malicious than that of others. God, having loved her more and bestowed more graces upon her, has a right to expect more love and fidelity and is more deeply wounded by a slight infidelity in one of His Spouses than by the gravest sins committed by an ordinary soul.

In fact the injuries I receive from an enemy or a stranger do not affect me very much; but I cannot bear that one I love and to whose affection I have a claim, should show me the least coolness. Is this not what Our Lord meant when He said to Blessed Margaret Mary, showing her His Heart all on fire: "Behold this Heart which has so loved men that It has left nothing undone to prove its love for them and receives nothing but ingratitude from them in return. But what I feel most is that it is hearts that are consecrated to Me that treat Me so."

"Revealing to me, then, His Loving Heart, all torn and transpierced with wounds: "Behold," He said to me, "the wounds I have received from My chosen people. The others are satisfied with attacking My Body; these attack My Heart,

which has never ceased to love them. But at last My Love will give way to My just Anger and chastise these proud ones attached to earth who scorn Me and love only what is opposed to Me, abandoning Me for creatures, fleeing from humility only to pursue self-esteem. And their hearts, being void of charity, they have nothing of the Religious about them but the name."

So I am not mistaken; it is really true; my sins grieve Jesus more than the sins of others. Because I am wholly consecrated to Him because I am dearer to Him; He is more sensitive, I might almost say holily jealous and divinely sensitive to my least faults. The slightest want of respect on the part of a Religious cuts Him to the quick, and He wants His Spouses to know it, since He revealed it to one of them. This suffering is so great that he can no longer keep silence regarding it; like ourselves, He seems to feel the need of opening His Heart to another to relieve it of the weight which oppresses it. Unworthy Spouse that I am! I should have been a consolation to my Divine Spouse, and by my cowardice and tepidity in His service, I have pierced His Heart. By my love and fidelity I should have assuaged the grief which the hard-heartedness and ingratitude of men have caused Him and I have increased it by my coldness, my indifference, my sins perhaps. Is not the life I am leading, even now, a source of grief to Him. There is still so much egotism about me, such petty unworthiness, such foolish and ungrateful rebellion against the Holy Spirit; such opposition to His Will and above all, such harmful delays in responding to His grace. After having bestowed so many graces and showered so many favours and divine caresses upon me, wouldst Thou expect such unworthy

treatment from me, O My Beloved? I see now in the Divine light Thou givest me, sin is more horrible, more abominable, more inexcusable in a Religious than in any other soul. The Spouse of Sanctity sullied by sin, what a contradiction!

Like Esther, confounded by the splendour of Thy Majesty and Thy Sanctity, I fall at Thy feet, O My Spouse, My King, My Love. Happier than this Queen, I know that Thou hast called me. I hope, therefore, that with Thy All-merciful, All-powerful and All-loving hand, Thou wilt lift me up from the state of tepidity to which I have fallen, Thou wilt hear my fervent prayer because Thou lovest me and Thou wilt destroy in me all that is unworthy of Thee ! Yes, destroy all that might wound Thy Heart, O My Spouse.

Second Point.—Sin is opposed to my name and title, Religious of Our Lady of Charity. Nothing is more opposed to charity, to love, than sin. Charity and sin are contradictory terms, irreconcilable enemies. They cannot exist together in a soul; perfect charity destroys sin or sin destroys charity. If, as my name, Religious of Our Lady of Charity, requires, this divine virtue reigns in my heart, it must combat and uproot sin therein, yea, even the very appearance and shadow of sin. To commit it would be to misunderstand the meaning of this beautiful title! It would be at least belieing and dishonouring it, for sin is an act of hate against love and charity.

In destining me from all Eternity to bear the name of Daughter of Our Lady of Charity rather than another, God, Who does nothing without reason, destined and obliged me in a manner to give charity absolute sway over my whole life and all my actions, this kingly virtue should be, therefore, the principle, the rule and the end of all my works,

and should have no subject more docile than I to its laws and inspirations.

If this is so, sin should appear in my soul only as an extremely rare accident in which the will has no part or almost none; where true and perfect charity exists, there is no room for sin. Finally, God and my title require me not only to make charity reign in myself, but also to revive and rekindle it in souls where it is dead or languishing. Now, it is evident that if it does not hold full sway in my heart, it will be very difficult or rather absolutely impossible for me to make it reign or to establish it sufficiently in others. In order to combat sin more efficaciously, I must be exempt from it myself and filled with charity, since contraries are combatted only by contraries.

Love of God should, therefore, be my first or rather my only motive, in combatting sin in myself and in others. I will not say with the Quietists: "What matter the reward which awaits me if I avoid it, or the punishment I merit if I commit it?" But it grieves and wounds the God Whom I love. That suffices to make me avoid it at any cost! O God, Who art charity, I thank Thee for having made me Thy Spouse and given me Thy admirable name. May I henceforth bear it more nobly. Thou are Charity, I desire to be Charity too, all Charity and nothing but Charity, so that sin may have no part with me!

Point Three.—On account of my fourth Vow, my sin is more grave. And how will the good example to which our fourth Vow binds us, exist with sin? Who knows what a baneful impression the sin of a soul consecrated to God, makes upon those who witness it. People are always surprised at the faults noticed in her, when they are not

scandalized. A soul must be extraordinarily tempered not to be affected by the bad example under its very eyes. This is doubly so if this bad example comes from a person making profession of piety. They expect to find a Religious perfect and make a crime of her smallest faults! The less virtuous wish to find in her an heroic virtue; even the world is severe in its judgments and, broad-minded as it is with itself, it refuses to forgive her anything. It is still more severe when there is question of a Religious devoted to the education and restoration of souls because these faults touch it nearest and it has a more direct interest in her being wholly irreproachable.

Moreover, let us not forget that the eyes of our children are on us, often more closely than ours are on them. Nothing escapes them. If they perceive a shadow on our virtue, they are not only scandalized, but frequently they take from it a license to do wrong themselves. They think themselves justified or at least excused when they can say: "Such a Religious does this or that."

So it is not for myself alone, but also for souls that I must avoid and combat sin, for the bad example I give in committing it, is perhaps the cause or at least the pretext of a great number of faults. However it may be, it is certain that my exterior and even my interior sins, in virtue of the law of joint liability, have a baneful influence on all souls in general and on our children in particular. By lessening the esteem these children have for me (a slight misfortune it is true, but one I should avoid for the honour of Religion) they ill dispose them to receive my instructions and my counsels and dispose them to do what I do rather than what I say.

Here again charity demands that I avoid sin

however slight it may appear to me. To make God loved as I desire, I myself must love Him enough not to offend Him.

What a misfortune if, instead of saving souls, as my fourth Vow requires, I should be the cause of their Eternal ruin!

O My Jesus, do not, I beseech Thee, permit me ever to be a strumbling block or a scandal to any soul! Make me truly pure and holy so that others may, as my profession and my title of Daughter of Our Lady of Charity demand, take me for their model. O Our Lady of Charity, my dear Mother, let that pure and ardent charity which made thee a victim of love and preserved thee from the very shadow of sin, reign in my soul.

SECOND CONSIDERATION.

Fidelity to the Little Observances.

"It is a great thing to be faithful to God in little things," says our holy father St. Augustine. And yet how many small observances and little rules are not observed or at least only imperfectly so; they are a neglected gold-mine, which, if well worked, would enrich us with treasures for Heaven. Whilst we are dreaming of extraordinary means to perfection, we neglect the surest, the easiest and the shortest. And yet, says Father Hérambourg, "common actions with an uncommon interior are worth a great deal more than penances and uncommon actions with a very common interior.

1. Fidelity in little things is a means of perfection within the reach of all. Everyone has not

the inspiration and consequently neither the grace nor the strength to do great and extraordinary things for God, but all can and should, if they really wish to be Religious, be faithful in little things.

2. It is a means always within our reach. Even if God asked great things of us, He would never ask them but at intervals far apart, whereas each hour, each moment of the day, we have some little rule, some trifling observance to follow. There is not an exercise, not a place where we cannot give attention to some point of our Constitutions or Customs. The Rule follows us step by step without ever leaving us day or night.

3. This means is so much surer in that it is more common, more humble and consequently less likely to expose us to the danger of pride and vain glory. It is so easy to conceal little acts of fidelity. They usually attract so little attention. We can fearlessly employ all our fervour and devotion on this humble and vast field. We will not be any more esteemed for it. What a precious refuge for a soul desirous of concealing itself, of being ignored and of being holy without being annoyed and wearied by the honour and praise of creatures.

4. This is an easy means. It does not require extraordinary strength, but only good-will, attention and perseverance. Who will dare to say that it is hard to keep silence or at least to speak lower in such a place, to make an inclination or bow in such a way, to keep one's eyes cast down in the regular places, to use such a formula, to come to the Assemblies in such a disposition; in a word, to subject ourselves to all that our Directory prescribes? Let us read it attentively

and we will find a host of things very easy on the whole and yet habitually omitted or at least neglected. What a mistake! How poorly we understand our spiritual affairs. How much we are losing all through our own fault.

"Remember," says Mgr. Gay, "that in the exquisite intercourse you should by your state enjoy with God, causes which seem petty may have grave consequences, annul important graces and trammel great designs. Doubtless a loud noise is necessary to prevent a shout from being heard; a very slight noise is enough to prevent our hearing the sigh of a breeze. Now, usually the graces God gives us, whatever may be their nature and their end, resemble the sigh rather than the shout. God sometimes deigns to shout in the ears of sinners, but with His friends He prefers to whisper; and you are well aware, especially in the case of affection (and such is the case in God's intercourse with souls) what is whispered is worth a great deal more than what is spoken aloud."

5. Lastly, our Rule and our Constitutions contain for us that life-giving sap, that life and strength which our Bl. Founder imbibed from Our Lord and which He wishes to communicate to us. This may be said of the Rule of any Order.

Rev. Mother Mary de Sales Chappuis, a Religious of the Visitation, was so penetrated with this truth that she preferred to everything else, exact observance of the Rule to which she was faithful in every detail. To make a proper inclination, to keep her hands joined precisely as it is marked, were great things in her estimation. She was a model of regularity on the most ordinary occasions. She became so only by a constant fidelity and self renunciation from the very beginning of her Religious life.

"When I was a postulant," she said one day, "I did not think I would ever be able to follow the observances, as I found it so hard to subject myself to little things; but our holy Founder says that everything to which we subject ourselves for God, is of great value in His eyes; so I earnestly set to work at it."

What this Religious says in another place of the Visitation Order may also be applied to us for we have the same Rule and Constitutions as this Order, to which our is so indebted.

"Our holy Founders have not made the Order for one generation only; they did not wish it to subsist only for them, but they have made it to last till the end of the world and have arranged all that is necessary for that end; this will suffice and if we feel the need of anything more, it is because we will not do what they have said.

"It is a dangerous thing to seek without when we have such an abundance within. It is the exact practice of the Directory which points the way, and this way always has something new about it; it contains great inspirations and great joys. Distracted souls without much mental capacity cannot understand it and are tempted to seek without, they become worried, restless, they disturb themselves very much and do harm. The Rule points out the exterior helps to which we may have recourse and also the discretion with which we should make use of them; if we go beyond the letter and the spirit of the Rule, we are courting a ruin which is to be dreaded and give others an example which might result in the weakening of the Institute and forgetfulness of the intentions of our holy Founders."

"The Directory is our Heaven on earth; but Heaven is the Will of God accepted and loved.

In following the Directory, you are assured that you are accomplishing the will of God at every moment. An angel does not come and reveal to us that we are assuredly accomplishing the Divine Will; it is a truth of Faith for us.

"The Church assures us by our Rule, which is approved, that we are doing what God wills, what He loves best, what He demands of us moment by moment."

II

Still another reason, an all-powerful one to induce a true Spouse of Jesus to exact fidelity, is that attention to little things is the hair and the glance which delightfully wounds the Heart of her Spouse, incline It towards her, opens it wide and makes her mistress of It so far as to let her draw from it at liberty the graces she needs.

Jesus grants the least desires of this soul. He cannot refuse anything to one who does not refuse Him anything. Fidelity for fidelity! All for all! You give Him all, He will give you all. He will even go far beyond your desires. Witness this Sister mentioned in the Model Religious. She paid a visit to a sick woman, who expressed a desire to eat a bird. Being unable to satisfy this caprice, the charitable visitor in her embarrassment, raised her eyes to Heaven, when suddenly she saw a bird fly towards her, light on the window and allow itself to be caught without the least resistance. This Religious must have been very faithful in satisfying the least desires of her Spouse. Such incidents are not rare in the lives of the Saints and if we have faith, there is nothing surprising about them. How could God allow Himself to be outdone in generosity by His creature?

Another motive of fidelity to little rules is that among friends, love is proved much less by signal service than by the little attentions they bestow upon each other. Elementary love does not fail in great things, but a superior and delicate love prevents the beloved from being wounded even in trifles.

If, then, we wish to prove to our Heavenly Spouse that we love Him with an ardent love, little things must become great in our eyes. God is so great that He enlarges everything that is directed to Him. Moreover, His measures are not our measures; a thing which appears small and petty in our eyes is great in His. Besides, as Mgr. Gay says, "if there is to be anything little before God, there must, first of all, have been something great"; now what is great before the Infinite? But then perhaps we will say, a God so great does not amuse Himself with weighing atoms and moreover He wishes us to be at our ease with Him. Nothing is truer; we must not be miserly, but generous, and most generous with a God so good.

But why has He made known to us His will in regard to so many little things marked in our Rules? Would these petty details, written at the dictation of His Holy Spirit, be unworthy of His Greatness? And is it not enough for Our Spouse to express a wish in order to have it granted. Do we think we have a right to refuse Him because He asks little? Or that the facility of observing the minor points of the Rule becomes a dispensation from them?

Does God merit obedience less when He commands little things than when He commands great ones? Surely He is free to ask these little nothings! Who is free, Who is Master like a Creator!

Are we not less excusable in refusing Him little sacrifices than in refusing Him heroic ones? In the latter case, perhaps our weakness might excuse us. But how can we justify our refusal when there is only question of doing a slight violence to ourselves in order to please Him? And to whom do we give when we refuse Him? To Nature, to passion, to the demon who may perhaps mock Our Lord, saying: "Thy Spouse gives me the enemy of her happiness, what she refuses Thee!" Would we expose our Spouse to this cutting irony? Oh no! No, never!

All Thy Wills are adorable, O My dear Lord. All will be equally sacred to me and I will gladly submit to them. I love Thee and desire only to prove my love; whether it be by great or little things does not matter. It suffices that Thou willest or desirest a thing for me to consider it a delightful obligation. Henceforth there are neither great nor small things to me, but all are great and little together; great since they can tell Thee of my love; little as compared with what Thou deservest and what I should and would like to do for Thee, O My Jesus.

III.

"En ipse stat post parietem nostrum respiciens per fenestras, prospiciens per cancellos"—Behold He standeth behind our wall, looking through the windows, looking through the lattices." Is anything further needed to induce me not to neglect any part of my duties? "En ipse"—"Behold Him"—My Beloved. Behold Him quite near me although He is invisible on account of the wall of my body. He is looking at me, He has His gaze fixed upon me. He is watching me closely, noth-

ing can escape Him. If I have any love for Him will I offend Him before His eyes?

Thus I should speak and think, if I have faith. The thought of the loving gaze of My Spouse should be the last and supreme motive of my fidelity in exactly observing all the petty rules and observances or customs of the Order.

Daughter of Our Lady of Charity, the fear of incurring the anathema of Our Lord, "He who contemneth small things shall fall by little and little," must not be the only motive of my exactitude. But the great motive-power, the measure and constant rule of my fidelity in little things is charity, pure and generous love.

Lastly, love of my neighbour, inseparable from the love of God, zeal for the salvation of souls should lead me to an exact and punctual observance of the pretty rules and customs. If our Penitents or other children observe any negligence in us the idea they have of our obligations magnify these faults in their eyes and we will lose the prestige that our virtue gave to our authority over them. What will they think when we reprove them for small faults? Their imagination or the demon, if need be, would recall to their minds the infractions they saw us commit on such and such an occasion. They will say that we reprove them merely as a matter of form, that at heart we do not attach the importance to their faults that we seem to do, since we commit similar ones ourselves; and hence our observations, our corrections will become almost useless. Every Religious of Our Lady of Charity should be permeated with these thoughts, but especially the Mistresses, and more especially the directresses of the Third Order, who, having to deal with souls more versed in spiritual matters, should be more

strictly on their guard so as to be a model to them in every way and not destroy by their actions what they endeavour to build up by their instructions. If these souls see us exact in regard to silence, modesty, religious decorum, prompt and punctual in regard to obedience, few words are needed to convince them of the necessity and excellence of these little and humble virtues.

O Our Lady of Charity, faithful Virgin, obtain for me that perfect fidelity which made thee so great in the eyes of God. Pour into my heart a few sparks of the fire of love which never allowed thee to dispense thyself from the least point of the law!

THIRD DAY

I. MEDITATION.

Tepidity in a Daughter of Our Lady of Charity.

"Quia tepidus es, incipiam te evomere."

"Because thou are neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth." Apoc. iii., 16.

First Point.—The dispositions which my name and rank as Daughter of Our Lady of Charity require are scarcely less opposed to tepidity than to sin. In effect, charity is ardent, generous, active; it runs, it flies, nothing stops it, nothing costs, nothing i sa burden to it. Tepidity, on the contrary, is languishing, idle and cowardly in the accomplishment of its duties; it crawls rather than walks; nothing stops it. Everything costs, everything is a burden, in a word, tepidity is the opposite of that charity described in the Fifth Chapter of the Third Book of the Imitation. There is nothing further from tepidity than the spirit of our Congregation; it is above all a spirit of charity, fervour and zeal. All the writings, all the words of Our Blessed Founder breathe the fire of the most ardent charity. I would not be a daughter of Blessed Father Eudes, nor a Religious of Our Lady of Charity if I lead a tepid life. If though impossible, this deplorable condition could be permitted to a soul, it certainly would not be so to a Daughter of the Mother of Fair Love.

During this retreat, therefore, I desire to renew myself in the fervour demanded by my vocation and conceive such a horror of tepidity that I may never have the misfortune to fall into it. To that end, I must examine my life in detail, by the lamp of charity, to see how I fulfill my duties and pious exercises.

One never falls suddenly into this dangerous disposition, but get there insensibly and by degrees. Therefore, I should be very vigilant over my actions to dispel languor and negligence and to animate them with that ardent fervour, that vehement love which is the distinguishing characteristic of every child of Bl. John Eudes.

No, I no longer desire to crawl, O my generous Saviour. I will walk with a firm and determined step; I will run after Thee, like the Spouse in the Canticles. If hitherto, I have unhappily lived in tepidity, I beg forgiveness. I desire to rise from it immediately. But, as Thou givest me the will, give me also the strength and the courage to do so. Grant that I may love Thee ardently, O God, Consuming Fire, that I may pray fervently and serve Thee generously as becomes a true Daughter of Our Lady of Charity.

Second Point.—Tepidity is opposed to the holiness of our vocation and the duties of our state. In the first place, it is opposed to the holiness of our vocation. God said to the people of Israel, "Be ye holy because I am holy." These words are a formal command, a positive order, addressed to all men in general. But every day during the August Sacrifice, a word, the most beautiful perhaps in the Liturgy of earth and Heaven, applied to my Divine Spouse, warns me to aspire to something more eminent than the sanctity of the faithful: "Holy, Holy, Holy Lord!"

Now, if the Lord, my Spouse, is thrice holy, should I not also be thrice holy so as to respond to His designs upon me and especially to the honour of being His Spouse?

1. Holy: by closing my heart to all attachment, to all affection for created things.

2. Holy: By closing my mind to all resistance to the Will of my God.

3. Holy: By removing my body from all sensual pleasures. Holy by the fervent practice of the three vows—poverty, chastity and obedience.

Now, how could the tepid religious be thrice holy? After having quitted her possessions in the world, she is attached to the trifles given her for her use without worrying about her Vow of Proverty. She murmurs about her superior's conduct and arbitrarily interprets her orders and intensions without caring about her Vow of Obedience. She allows herself frivolous reading thoughts which are at least dangerous, sensual friendships and pleasures, without even wondering if her Vow of Chastity is compromised. In fine, she is content to keep her vows, without aspiring, at least practically, to the virtue of which they are the object.

When the Church deputes me to pray in her name, can I comply with her intention by reciting my office with tepidity and negligence, mechanically? Whence come so many distractions, so many wandering thoughts, so many vain anxieties, if not from the fact that my heart is far from God? "These people honour Me with their tips but their heart is far from Me." If I am tepid, my prayer is only weariness and disgust. I do not bring to my Communions that purity of con-

science which assures their fruitfulness. My Confessions are without any amendment; my examen without attention and without a firm purpose; my work without ardour, or if there is any, it is natural and temperamental. Everything is done mechanically, through routine, without reflection, without fervour, without love and consequently, without glory for God or merit for myself.

Far from me, O my Good Jesus, be such dispositions. They are intolerable in Thy spouse. I would bear this noble name unworthily if I were for a moment tepid and languid in the service of a God burning with love for me! No! no more coldness, indifference or languor in the fulfilment of my duties! I ought to, and will be all on fire with love for Thee! Thou art "a consuming Fire," dispel my coldness, consume all my imperfections! Consume my whole being!

Third Point.—Tepidity is opposed to the end of my vocation.—My vocation is a truly apostolic one. I entered religion, I chose the Order of Our Lady of Charity, to glorify God more perfectly; 2, to sanctify myself more fully; 3, to labour more efficaciously for the salvation of sinners.

Now, how can I glorify God if I perform my exercises of piety and all my duties with tepidity? How could I expect God to be glorified by prayers said negligently and with disgust, and those duties which I perform merely through routine?

2. How can I sanctify myself by doing the work of God negligently? What sanctity (which amounts to divine resemblance) can I attain by a commonplace life, i.e., a life filled with terres-

trial thoughts, human affections, impotent wills and feeble actions? In the history of the Church we do not find a single saint who attained perfection by the path of tepidity. All are ardent, generous and fervent.

3. Lastly, I consecrated myself to God to restore souls, steeped in sin, to grace and sanctity. Now, if I am not holy myself, how can I sanctify others? No one can give what he does not possess. If I am tepid how can I re-animate and inflame souls? I may disedify them, scandalize them perhaps, but sanctify them, never!

I realize, O My God, I am convinced that tepidity is wholly inconsistent with my obligations. I am fully resolved to fight it to the death in myself and in souls entrusted to me. It suffices for me to know that this deplorable disposition provokes Thy indignation to realize how odious it is to Thy tender, loving Heart and to enkindle in mine a burning love and intense fervour.

Alas! Alas! there are already too many religious souls living in tepidity for me to go on increasing the number. I desire, on the contrary, by my tender, fervent love to make Thee forget the suffering caused Thee by the indifference and coldness of men and especially by the tepidity of so many souls whom Thou lovest so much as to call them Thy Spouses! Spouse of Fire! melt these ice-cold spouses. Rouse them from their sleep of death; change their hearts by contact with Thine own all aflame with charity!

O most loving Heart, grant that we may be burned and consumed in Thy flames so that we may be all on fire with love for Thee!

II. MEDITATION.

Abuse of Grace.

"Exhortamur vos ne in vacuum gratiam Dei recipiatis." "We exhort you not to receive the grace of God in vain." Cor. vi., 1.

First Point.—To live in tepidity and abuse grace is wholly an abuse of grace. 1. By underrating its worth. 2. By not making it as fruitful as it might be. 3. By making it fruitless. What is grace worth? it is worth its cost: the obscure birth, thirty-three years of pain and suffering of all kinds, the ignominous torments and death and the Blood of a God. Yes, grace is worth God since He immolated, annihilated and gave Himself up to death to buy this grace. And we abuse it so easily!

"The Cross of Jesus Christ is the origin and source of Christian grace; it is also its end, for this same grace is given us to crucify ourselves with Him; by reason of which the centre and element of Christian grace are in the cross, i.e., in humiliations, mortifications, and privations of all things. There it works wondrous effects, there it is easily preserved; and it cannot subsist in contrary things except by a miracle.—(Chapter vii., Wondrous Childhood of the Mother of God.

And does God give sparingly of this grace, which is so precious and of such infinite value? No, He pours it out bounteously, profusely, as if it had cost Him nothing, nay, as if I were obliging Him by receiving it.

Because Thou art so prodigal of Thy graces, O my God, must I deem them less precious. Must I be more insensible and ungrateful in proportion

as Thou art more generous and more loving? How many graces hast Thou bestowed on me since my birth, since my entrance into Religion, since my last retreat? Could I count them? God alone knows their number and their value. How many good thoughts and good desires, pious sentiments and holy inspirations, pure knowledge and deep regrets, salutary remorse and holy resolutions to amend my life? How many Masses, Confessions and Communions? How many spiritual readings, good counsels, and holy instructions? How many good examples and other graces of every kind, both interior and exterior?

If the Infidels had received so many graces from God, what fruit would they not have produced in them? One day, very soon perhaps, God will demand an account of all the graces, what can I answer or offer Him? It is time to think and prepare myself by a life of loving fidelity, to render an account of the talents I have received from the Divine Master.

This retreat is perhaps the last extraordinary grace God will grant me for my entire conversion; if I do not profit by it, I will never be converted and will continue to derive no fruit from the graces that have been purchased with the Blood of my Jesus. Every day I will be guilty of the abuse of new graces and perhaps risk not only my perfection, but my eternal salvation, for, with a Religious soul, salvation and perfection are inseparable.

Preserve me from so great an evil, O my beloved Saviour, make me more faithful to Thy grace, more generous and more fervent in the accomplishment of all my duties.

Second Point.—We abuse grace by not making it as fruitful as we might. Who does not abuse

it in this way? Only in Heaven will we understand all that grace can do in a soul where it meets no obstacle and to what extraordinary and eminent sanctity it leads. At sight of its master-pieces we will be rapt into eternal ecstasies. If regret were not incompatible with the joys of Paradise, even there we might experience it for not having fully corresponded with grace.

But, alas! how rare are souls who are perfectly faithful in profiting by the least graces! And how many struggles, refusals, delays and even rebuffs this grace has to endure to bring them to that exceptional disposition. Behold it struggling with its noblest conquests; St. Augustine, St. Ignatius, St. Francis Xavier, St. Magdalen, St. Theresa, etc., how they struggled against it?

God does us good only by force! We are so blind! We struggle against our happiness, we defend our slavery and our misery as one would defend his liberty and treasures; My God, the hearts of which Thou are Master have cost Thee dear. Poor Grace of Jesus, Thou art so badly treated by men.

But, when at length, really conquered and convinced that this grace, so long repulsed, brings it happiness, a soul surrenders to it, its vast field of labour, then this divene workman performs marvels. Then it makes saints. It makes gods. But it demands over and over again, more good will, more efforts, more generosity. If the soul wearies of giving, or simply makes it wait for what it asks, the work suffers, its progress is retarded. If the soul fails in generosity and does not give **All** that is asked of it the work will not be as perfect as it might have been. If the soul is not perfectly docile and goes off at a tangent

when grace is urging it in a certain direction, there is time lost, it might retrace its steps and resume the path which has been already traversed.

In fine, to make us saints, gods, grace must find us ever attentive, docile, active and above all generous; ever disposed to do and to give what it asks, **all** that it asks and as **soon** as it asks it.

Have I hitherto been faithful in this respect? Far from it. Alas, frequently I have received grace without reflection, without attention: God speaks and I do not heed Him; if in a louder tone He asks some sacrifice, greater efforts, I hesitate; if I yield I never do so fully. I am afraid that God may return to the charge; I really wish to be His, but I do not want Him to exact more than I intend to give Him. O My God, forgive me and change me during this retreat; I desire it and ask it humbly. I give myself to Thy grace; I surrender my soul to it. May it hold sovereign sway therein. Mother of grace, pray for me.

Third Point.—We abuse grace by allowing it to be fruitless. If we abuse grace by not making it as fruitful as it might be, the abuse is more grave and criminal, when we derive no fruit from it; when we receive it without becoming better, without advancing in perfection.

Grace is a divine element, essentially sanctifying. The soul that receives it without being sanctified may be compared to a patient to whom the strongest nourishment proves an injury rather than a remedy. In fact, all the graces I receive make me guilty if they do not make me more holy. Th more numerous and precious they are the more criminal and inexcusable I am in not profiting by them.

Now, all the graces which God gives a Religious are great and precious because they are destined to lead to the highest perfection, of she is faithful to them. Consequently, if she abuses them, these lost graces will lead her to the deepest perdition. Choice graces lead to the heights of Heaven or to the depths of Hell.

Can a Religious of Our Lady of Charity, who abuses grace, labour efficaciously for the salvation of souls? Evidently God does not give me these helps of every kind for myself alone. I am only an instrument, a channel through which He wishes to pass into the souls around me. Now, if I am not a docile instrument how can He make use of me? I will impede His action rather than assist it. I will be an obstacle to Him (if God can have any obstacles) and I run the risk of ruining the souls for whom I have vowed to labour.

For those who are more especially confided to me, I should be a large, open, spacious channel, so that the water of grace, meeting with on obstacle to delay it, no foreign element to sully it, may flow purely and abundantly into the hearts for whom God has destined it.

Hence, not only my own interest, but also the interest of souls is at stake in the use I make of grace; two considerations which should henceforth induce me to correspond to it more faithfully and generously.

If God has not yet stopped its flow, it is perhaps out of consideration for souls; it is perhaps on their account that he gives me this keen insight and so earnestly solicits me to give myself more perfectly to Him. However that may be, it is certain that I have abused grace; certain also that I must repair this abuse under pain of endangering my perfection and perhaps the salva-

tion of some souls. And I must repair it as soon as possible, for I do not even know if I will have time.

I understand these truths, O My God and Saviour, Source of all graces, and I am fully resolved to do and suffer all Thou pleasest in expiation of my abuse of so many graces and to correspond faithfully to those Thou wilt design to grant me in future: Mater gratiae, Mother of Grace, remember that thou art my dear Mother also and obtain for me a great abundance of grace and perfect fidelity in corresponding to it.

III. MEDITATION.

"Estote ergo vos perfecti, sicut et Pater vester coelestus perfectus est"—"Be ye, therefore, perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect." Matt. v., 48.

First Point.—This formal and precise command is addressed to me more than to anyone else. In fact, not only is The Eternal Father, my Father, by the right of creation and by the right of adoption, as He is of all Christians, but He is so by a new title, one dearer to His Heart and to mine; in giving me His only Son for my Spouse, He has made me His child by croice and by union. By the union with Jesus, a union which is a true spiritual marriage, I have joined the Family of God! (Bern. Serm.)

In this three-fold affiliation, I find a three-fold obligation to be, or rather to strive unceasingly to become perfect. I have a Father so perfect that He is perfection itself, the Author and Source of all perfection. Would I want to dishonour Him by the imperfection of my dispositions and actions?

But pray, what is perfection? Without repeating the grand definitions which the Masters of the Spiritual life give, we will say: "tI is the state of a soul when it has reached such a degree of perfection that, for it, there is no higher and absolutely nothing left for it to acquire It suffices to say that, understood thus, perfection is not of this world, where nothing is perfect because nothing is complete. Death alone fixes us in the degree of perfection, beyond which we can acquire nothing more. God desires that we should then have reached the degree of perfection which He has destined for us from all Eternity. Here upon earth, the perfection of a soul will therefore consist in making every effort, but absolutely everyone, to climb unceasingly the lower degrees of the final and definite perfection which should be the aim and reward of its labour as well as the glorification of God in the accomplishment of His eternal designs upon it. Hence there is not a single soul, still dwelling in a mortal body, however perfect it may be, which can not, by new acts of virtue, rise to a higher perfection and a more perfect resemblance to its Heavenly Father. A soul desirous of making progress finds here a vast field of labour and new horizons opened up before it. It can mount, mount and go on mounting higher and more rapidly. The space to be traversed is always greater than the space it has traversed. "Be ye perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect." So long as you have not attained this point you may go on, O my soul. You will try in vain, you will never do enough and there will always be too much dissimilarity between your Divine Father and you.

At least, do well what you do, it will still be very little. Would you wish to retrench anything

of the little you have done heretofore? It is time to think of it. "Noblesse oblige": Nobility has obligations! You are the Daughter of a perfect Father! You are a child of Increated Perfection: Be you therefore a created perfection. You cannot do less if you desire to bear your title of nobility honourably and have it acknowledged by the celestial court.

Second Point.—"Be you perfect as your Heavenly Spouse is perfect!" If the virtue of the Father appears in His children, that of the Spouse is faithfully imitated by a true and loving spouse. My celestial Spouse, Who is the Son of a Father infinitely perfect and Who is infinitely perfect Himself, desires and demands that I also should be perfect in order to resemble Him. I should desire nothing more ardently if I realize the favour He has done me and the obligations resulting therefrom.

The first care of a Spouse who is conscientious with regard to her mission, is to strive to please her spouse and to charm his existence by every means in her power. According to the expression of a great Doctor, "Jesus, my Spouse, is infinitely infinite in infinite perfections." Now, how could I please a spouse, infinitely perfect, if I were not perfect myself, as far as human weakness permits?

What delight, what pleasure could He enjoy in my company if I were only imperfection? My presence, far from rejoicing Him, would only grieve Him by the sight of my misery. I would be the malicious spouse who, knowing that her spouse loved her passionately and was extremely desirous of seeing her dressed according to her rank, would take pleasure in appearing before him unbecomingly dressed, just because that would displease him. A noble and perfect Spouse

must have a noble and perfect spouse at least in will, desires and efforts.

O Infinite Perfection, my Divine Spouse, Thou dost not exact too much in wishing me to be perfect; for Thou bestowest upon me with wondrous prodigality the graces necessary to become so. According to Thy divine teachings, we can ask much from one who has receiveth much. Who, I wonder, has received more than Thy poor unworthy spouse? Ah, I understand it; no one should love Thee more or serve Thee better than I; no one should labour more zealously and generously to become perfect in every virtue. The contemplation of Thy Divine perfections should excite in me a hunger and thirst to reflect them. Love supposes resemblance; in any case it always effects it! If I have a sincere, tender, profound love for Thee, I should be perfect, O my perfect Spouse. What a vast field for my activity! But must not Love have an immense, an infinite field.

Would I, a spouse, let simple servants surpass me in love and devotedness to Thee? Oh no, never! Rather will I say with St. Theresa, "That there may be some who serve Thee better than I, O Lord, I do not dispute, but that there should be any who love Thee more or desire Thy glory more ardently, I will never allow!" No, I will never forget the love Thou hast shown me in raising me up from my nothingness to rank me among Thy spouses, nor what such an excess of humility and affection on the part of a God, merits and requires.

I would be a monster of ingratitude if I did not endeavour to make myself worthy of such a Spouse. I should not flatter myself that I love Him if I do not labour to resemble Him, nor hope

to please Him without this Divine resemblance. What a fool I am to labour for anything other than my perfection. What matters it whether creatures are pleased, if, by my imperfections, I displease my Divine Spouse; what joy can I find if not that of pleasing Him in all things? "Be ye perfect as your Heavenly Spouse is perfect." O my soul, I shall repeat these words unceasingly to inflame my zeal and my desire of perfection, which means union with God, the only and essential perfection, perfect union with His divine attributes, all of which I should reflect. Perfection! The highest perfection! Behold the end of my life. There only should I rest. So long as I have not attained it, I ought not allow myself a moment's respite.

Third Point.—But this perfection so necessary,, so indispensable to my happiness, does not consist in desires alone which are too often vain and deceiving If sincere, they are something no doubt, but they are not everything. They are a proof of a certain good will, but we must not believe in the reality of this good will so long as it does not vent itself in positive acts. The perfection of a Religious consists in the punctual and perfect fulfilment of every point of the Rule. Duty perfectly accomplished and accomplished before everything else; that and that only is the full perfection.

"There must be no inconsistency," says St. Jerome, "a sublime ideal and a commonplace life! a widow's or a virgin's dress and worldly habits. We must have means relating to the end. Whoever chooses the perfect life must walk in the perfect way." To be perfect, we must be so in everything; if a single point is wanting, there is no perfection; for an incomplete thing is never

a perfect thing. I must perfect myself, i.e., complete myself in everything; the virtues are so bound together that if a single link is missing all the others feel the effects; they have less strength, less brilliance. Sanctity is a chain, the virtues are the links; to hold one firmly is to be assured of all the others and of the whole chain. To neglect one virtue is to break a link and risk the loss of the chain. It is not enough for me to practise mortification if charity is lacking and, if obedience does not regulate my conduct, my humility is only a snare. The least Rule neglected is a breach of perfection.

Oh, how few Religious understand the full extent of their obligations and sincerely strive to tend to perfection. And these souls are Thy Spouses, O my God. Everything obliges them to sanctity. Thy love, the choice and preference with which Thou dost honour them, the gratitude demanded by so many graces bestowed upon them, the title of friends, sisters, spouses, all, absolutely all, make it an indispensable duty for them to be perfect and they do not think of it.

Alas, am I not myself one of those blind, ungraceful and miserly souls who, incessantly receiving Thy divine profusion, give to Thee but rarely and niggardly. What progress have I made in perfection after many years spent in religion? Am I not more imperfect than in the first years of my religious life? At least I was then more ardently desirous of perfection; I laboured at it more assiduously, I was more faithful in little things, more courageous in overcoming myself and punishing myself for my slightest failings? Is this not saying that I had more love for Thee, O Jesus, Increated Perfection? Forgive my past cowardice; since in this retreat Thou dost

me the favour of speaking to me and revealing Thy divine will in my regard; give me also the strength and courage to do what Thou commandest and then command what Thou pleasest.

INSTRUCTION OF THE V.H.M. MARY ANGELICA DE BALDE.

On the Religious Life.

Every day of the life of a soul consecrated to God should be marked by some victory. We must continually prune the vineyard of the Lord to make it bear the fruits of eternal life. When we no longer experience difficulty in the practice of virtue, we must still to the very last moment of our existence, purify our intentions.

Our holy Constitutions tell us that Religion, or rather "Our Congregation, is a Mount Calvary where the chaste Spouses of Jesus Christ are crucified with Him." We are not called to Thabor to contemplate His glory, but to dwell at the foot of the Cross, there to learn detachment, obedience, poverty and perfect charity.

All Eternity, being destined to enjoy Jesus glorified, it is quite just that the present time should be occupied in serving Jesus Christ and conforming ourselves to Him. Let us seriously meditate on His Passion. We can not go to Him except by the path He has walked. God has told us that no one enters Heaven without doing violence to himself. The Humanity of Jesus Christ entered it only by the Cross; He wishes us to imitate Him; He glories in seeing us walk in His footsteps.

St. John declares in the Apocalypse that one day He saw Our Lord mounted on a white steed, clother with a blood-stained garment and bearing a multitude of crowns on His Head. One of the Fathers of the Church in his explanation of this passage, says that this blood-stained robe is a symbol of the victories of the holy martyrs with which Our Lord is pleased to adorn Himself and that the crowns He wears on His Head are the acts of penance, humility, patience, and mortification that the Saints perform. When we do violence to our temper, when we overcome our passions and repress a natural feeling, we place a crown on the Head of Jesus Christ. What glory and consolation to crown Him Who will one day crown us!

The difficulty we experience in the practice of virtue should not discourage us; it diminishes in practice. This is the mysterious book that Ezechiel was commanded to eat; although it was full of curses, lamentations and regrets, the prophet found it sweet and agreeable to the taste. Besides, if there is difficulty in conquering self, the heart is never better satisfied than after having refused some satisfaction to its evil appetites.

By God's grace we have surmounted the greatest difficulties; would we now let little ones stop us? That is the characteristic of cowardly souls like the Israelites of the Tribes of Reuben and Gad, who, after having quitted Egypt and having only the Jordon to cross, asked Moses to allow them to stay on the shores of that River because, said they, this land will supply good pasture for our flocks. In vain did Moses set forth the great advantages of the Promised Land, the short distance to be traversed to reach it; it had no effect. This place suited their flocks and was good enough for them.

Would we not be more guilty than these Israelites, if after having quitted the Egypt of the world, lived a long time in Religion, having only the Jordan or the waters of tribulation to cross to reach Heaven, we should prefer to stay and pasture our flocks, i.e., our evil inclinations. Let us be more generous, let us complete that which, with the grace of God, we have begun, for the crown will be given only to perseverance. Man learns to overcome himself and to direct all the affections of his heart to God only by long and difficult combats with self.

We should not set limits to our perfection. When we possess one virtue we must labour to acquire all the others, not in a spirit of vanity, but to correspond with the designs of our Creator. Since our soul has the honour of being made to the image of God, we should continually endeavour to make it resemble its Divine Model, for it is written: "Be ye perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect."

III. CONSIDERATION.

Silence.

"It cannot be doubted that silence is most holy and most pleasing to Almighty God; for our Lord Jesus Christ, the Eternal Word of the Father, Who came upon this earth in order to speak to men—Who had so many great and weighty things to say, and from Whose mouth could issue nothing but what was most holy and divine—even He willed nevertheless to dwell so long in silence. He was silent in His sacred Infancy, during the thirty years of His hidden life, during the forty

days of His retirement in the desert; and He has been silent for more than 1,900 years and will be silent till the end of time in the Blessed Sacrament.

"Our Adorable Saviour came upon earth to glorify His Father and to show us by His example the best means of honouring God and sanctifying our souls. Seeing, therefore, that He so especially chose and practised silence, we must conclude that silence is a most excellent and effective way of carrying out these ends. The Blessed Virgin, His Mother, and all the Saints, have eagerly striven to follow Him in the practice of silence. It is one of the shortest ways to God and to Christian perfection. The Apostle St. James assures us that he who does not sin in words is perfect; and on the contrary, anyone who thinks himself religious and does not bridle his tongue, deceives himself and his religion is vain and false.

"The Sisters, therefore, following the example of Our Lord and His Blesed Mother, shall have an extraordinary affection for silence and shall take particular care to observe it." Const. 28.

II.

Solomon teaches us in the Book of Ecclesiasticus that there is a time to speak and a time to be silent, for both one and the other we must chose the opportune time. In another place the Scripture says: "The Lord wishes us to be prompt to obey, prompt to labour, prompt to hear, but slow to speak." David bridled his tongue and even kept silence from good things when it was not a time to speak.

Silence, says Cassiodorus, preserves us from many faults and sins which are so easily committed in speech. It provents or stifles, by a holy

moderation, altercations and disputes. It is a sign of extraordinary prudence, it gives more grace and interest to speech. It nourishes good thoughts, develops sentiments of piety, prevents dissipation, preserves self-control and favours the progress of the understanding. It gives a taste for spiritual things, increases facility in prayer, favours union with God by recollection, makes the soul attentive to His voice which is heard in secret, and draws down special graces upon it. Lastly, it procures interior peace and fills the soul with a heavenly joy unknown to the world.

Let us, therefore, have constant recourse to this sovereign remedy; let us drink of this salutary beverage; and since we know that the Saints have found the practice of silence a great means of advancing in perfection, let us deem unworthy of our esteem a liberty of speech which knows no bounds. Let us cherish the silence of our cell and respect that of the whole Monastery.

Holy intercourse with God and profane intercourse with creatures are incompatible. He who does not abstain from speaking with men, cannot speak familiarly with God. "Of what use us bodily solitude," says St. Gregory, "if it is not accompanied by interior solitude?"

We do not read in the Gospel that the Blessed Virgin spoke more than four times, remarks St. Bernard, and then she did so with admirable sobriety. St. John the Baptist, model of the solitary life, spent the first thirty years of his life in the silence of the desert. But without mentioning the anchorites, all the patriarchs of the monastic or community life, St. Pachomius, St. Basil, St. Benedict, our holy Father St. Augustine have made silence the basis of their rules. All were penetrated with this maxim of the spirit of

truth. "In a multitude of words, there shall not want sin; he that keepeth his mouth, keepeth his soul."

Father Guy de Fontaines, an Eudist, says that silence is the easiest means to preserve our virtues, to acquire those we lack and to unite us to God. And does not Rodriguez assure us that the fervour of a community is judged by its fidelity to silence. To restore a relaxed Community to fervour, he says, we have only to reinforce the rule of silence; and on the contrary, the neglect of this one point suffices to leave nothing of the religious life but the name in a house that was formerly fervent.

Should not all these considerations reanimate our fervour and inspire us all with a practical love of religious silence?

III.

"The Sisters following the example of Our Lord and His Blessed Mother shall have an extraordinary affection for silence." Oh, it is not without reason that the Constitution uses such positive terms in recommending the holy and salutary practice of silence. For others, it seems to say, for others solely occupied with their perfection in the solitude of their cells, an ordinary affection for this rule of silence might suffice, as they have less occasion to fail in it, but for you an extraordinary affection is indispensable. Otherwise a thousand reasons will convince you that it is necessary to speak; your charge with its many occupations, especially if you are employed in the classes, the distribution or supervision of the work, orders to be given and remarks to be made, souls to be encouraged or to be reproved and a

hundred other things; and then may we not say a word to a sister when we meet her, ask or give advice if necessary.

All these things generally authorize us, and frequently oblige us to speak. But a Religious who has a real and extraordinary affection for silence can speak without violating the Rule because she knows how to speak to the purpose.

Our Constitutions have foreseen all these difficulties and have provided for them with admirable prudence. The hours to speak and those of silence follow in sucession in our day; if we speak at the proper time we will find it easy to keep silence at the proper time without anything suffering thereby. As for cheerful and agreeable things, have we so much to say that three hours' recreation do not suffice? Seven minutes are given us after each obedience to treat of the business of our charges; there are also two periods of simple recollection, during which we may speak of unforeseen necessities; is this not sufficiently condescending for human weakness? Can we not keep that perfect silence which is required of us during the remainder of the day?

Far from dispensing us from this practice, our employment with the children makes it more obligatory. How shall we persuade them to keep the silence prescribed by their rule, if they see us making little account of our own obligations in that respect, which are stricter than theirs. What weight, what authority would our words not have upon souls if they never heard us speak idle ones. Let us never speak to them often, long or much if we always want our words to be fruitful. We grow accustomed to the words of a person who is talking continually, as the ear does to the tick-tack of a mill. When we are obliged to speak, let us use as few words as possible; if

three suffice, never use four. In fine, let us not speak easily even on the pretext of reproving them.

Among ourselves, Sisters, let us not allow during silence time, a single word which can be postponed till recreation. Let us leave unspoken a word which might perhaps distract our sister from holy converse with her Heavenly Spouse. Let us beware of giving her cause of relaxation, dissipation or perhaps making her lose the fruit of prayer.

"After the Obedience, all shall retire in silence. Those, however, who are in charge of the offices of the house may stay behind with the Superior to acquaint her with any matters of which mention could not be made in the presence of others for fear of disturbing their minds." Would we interpret this passage of the Constitution properly, if we speak of our charges during silence time, to those whose peace of mind we are to respect during recreation.

In order not to say too much, let us say nothing at all. Very often we intend to say one word, and we say a hundred, if not more. "It is easier to keep silence altogether than not to fail in speaking," says the Author of the Imitation, and "no one can safely speak but he who loves silence." To speak little to creatures but much to God, to renounce vain and curious conversations, to employ one's tongue only in speaking of good or necessary things is an excellent means of becoming interior, to preserve purity of heart and conscience and to be closely united to God.

But our silence should not be merely exterior. Article VIII. of the Directory explains this clearly, saying: "It has been holily instituted not only to prevent useless talk, but also to allow the

heart to occupy itself not in foolish and distracting thoughts, but in interior conversation with the Divine Spouse of souls, and thus store up fresh strength to labour unceasingly in His divine service."

So you see, this exterior silence is only a help to interior converse with our Jesus, the Word, the substantial Word of our Father. The heart must speak: "Silentium cordis, frigus charitatis. If the heart is silent, love is cold," says St. Augustine. The soul which has experienced the charms of this divine converse scarcely feels the need of being communicative with creatures; this is rather a trial to it. It is so sweet to speak to Jesus. How can we allow anyone to hinder our doing so?

FOURTH DAY

Death of a Religious.

"Media autem nocte, clamor factus est: Ecce sponsus venit, exite obviam ei." "And at midnight there was a cry made: Behold the bridegroom cometh; go ye forth to meet Him." Matt. xxv., 6.

First Point.—Certainty and uncertainty, circumstances and results of death. "I shall die that is certain. It is appointed unto all men once to die," says St. Paul. I know that I shall die, but I know absolutely nothing more. When? How? Where? Under what circumstances, in what dispositions shall I die? I know not, neither can any one know that. "Ecce sponsus venit." "Behold the bridegroom cometh." How far away is He? Perhaps He is still far away, but perhaps, too, He is quite near. He is coming; He is coming; that is all I know. Ten years, one year, a month, a day, only an hour perhaps, and I shall be at the end of my life; I am going to die.

Yes, I shall die! On that bed, in that place where I have seen several of my sisters expire, I lie in my turn. Consumed with a burning fever, exhausted, pale, disfigured, I am a prey to anguish, the exhaustion and the fears of the final struggle; scarcely can my trembling hands clasp again the Crucifix of my Profession, the Christ Who on that blessed day became my spouse, but Who, ere long will be my Judge. The Priest, the father of my soul, who knows the secrets of my whole life, and the Mother whom Religion has given me, those two pledges of God's love for me are at my side, encouraging and sustaining my

pious inspirations my mind, which is as weak as my body. All my sisters are around me at this supreme hour and by their fervent prayers endeavour to allay this last drop of the chalice.

But ere long my eyes are troubled, the darkness of death envelopes me; I see nothing but shadows, I hear only confused noises, everything is fading away, disappearing, and I am about to be blotted out, and ere long forgotten in this world. I am going to die. But what will be the results of this death, the circumstances of which are so harrowing? These results are terrifying, they are eternal! The end of this life is but the beginning of a life without end, a happy or a miserable life for me. "As the tree falls, so shall it lie," and so does it lie forever.

Have I ever really thought of the duration of Eternity, that interminable succession of millions and millions of years which nothing will ever interrupt? It is in the light of Eternity that we must consider time in order to form a true conception of its brevity. What will twenty, forty, sixty and even eighty years, appear to me in a million centuries? What judgment will I pass on sorrow and joy? and which would I then wish to have predominated? What will the praise or blame, the esteem or contempt, the love or hatred of creatures, matter to me then?

Oh, how glad I shall be then to have laboured and suffered much for Gods and souls. "O blessed penance which has merited for me such a weight of glory," I shall say with St. Peter of Alcantara.

Oh folly! folly! folly! to fix one's mind and heart for a single moment on that which lasts so short a time. Yes, that is settled. Whether I live or die, I no longer wish to live in time which passes so quickly. Henceforth I will fix my

thoughts on Eternity, for ever, I will set up my dwelling there and from there, I wish to judge everything and measure all my actions. For Eternity I wish to live and die.

Following the example of St. Aloysius, I will ask myself before every action: "Quid hoc ad aeternitatem? What use will this be or Eternity?" We make little account of everything that passes with time when we have our eyes fixed on Eternity; and it is just because we give little or no thought to Eternity that the things of time take such a strong hold on us.

Second Point.—Death of a tepid Religious.—The death of sinners, according to the expression of the Holy Spirit is not only bad, but very bad. Very bad (1) by the trouble which agitates them, (2) by the despair into which they fall, (3) by the suddenness with which death carries them off. (4) Very bad and sovereignly bad by the final impenitence in which they die.

Now, would not the death of a tepid Religious recall at least some of these characteristics? Will she not have reasons to be disturbed in that she has done nothing or almost nothing of what was her duty and her rule? In that she has lived in the house of God and has not lived for God? In that she has left the world and still at the end of her life is as void of the spirit of God and as filled with the spirit of the world as if she had spent her whole life in it? In that she has known the way and the Will of God and has not followed them.

What cause for fear, especially for a Religious of Our Lady of Charity, in having made a vow to devote herself to the salvation of souls and having disedified, scandalized and perhaps led them to evil by word and example; in a word,

having compromised her own salvation by exposing that of souls whom it was her mission to save. "Oh, woe to the Daughter of Our Lady of Charity who has no souls to offer to God at the hour of her death," exclaimed Bl. Father Eudes. Will she have recourse to God? But it is the sight of this outraged God which causes her anxiety and fear. She knows how cowardly she has been in His service; thousands of sins which she treated as scruples, in a tepid and dissipated life, thousands of doubts which she would not enlighten or which she settled to please herself, return to her mind. If all this does not present itself to her in detail, it does so in a confused form and increases her fear and terror so much the more as she cannot disentangle it. Everything seems doubtful to her; her past confessions, her Communions, the inclinations of her heart which she has followed the friendships she formed, the false principles she adopted on capital and essential points, the liberties she allowed herself in contempt of the rule, to the scandal of the Community, the dispensations she has asked and the devious means she used to obtain them, the forgetfulness, at least neglegence of her Vows and especially the fourth.

A little while ago none of this bothered her, but this conscience, formerly so broad, is now a narrow conscience or rather an upright conscience which serves only to torment her. Her Confessor, her Superior, her Sisters in religion, strive to inspire her with confidence in God and speak to her again and again of His infinite Mercy, but in spite of all this there still remains a darkness in her soul, a painful uncertainty, a bitter remembrance of her obligations, a gnawing remorse for her perpetual transgressions and a fear of God's judgments, capable of discouraging her.

If she does not go so far as to despair like sinners of the world, the ray of hope which she preserves is very faint.

More pitiable still is the tepid Religious stricken down suddenly; we are no more protected from sudden death in religion than in the world. To the man of the world, to the Religious, His Spouse, God comes like a thief in the night, "media nocte," in the darkness, when we least expect Him.

A whole household witnessing such an incident is moved by it. Probably we judge the victim of a sudden death charitably, we pray a great deal, we hope, too; but we cannot conceal from ourselves that the life she led was not very religious and involuntarily we say to ourselves: it would have been desirable for her to have had time to enter into herself and prepare to die.

Time! time! Has she not had time? and the religious life, what should it be if not a long and fervent preparation for death? Alas, how many Religious have died in this kind of impenitence, too like the impenitence of sinners? That is, they have died in their tepidity. How many, even, we must say it in a retreat, how many Religious even, who, having ample time to prepare for death and receive the last Sacraments of the Church, have shown, when receiving them for the last time, the same indifference, the same coldness as they did during life.

Like life, like death! this is true of everything, and truer still of the Religious. How am I living? How do I intend to live after this retreat? So shall I die.

Third Point.—Death of a fervent Religious: The death of the just, the Scripture tells us, is precious, first, because they die in a holy detach-

ment and without any regret; second, because they die with a confidence full of consolation and sweetness; third, because they die in the practice of the most excellent virtues, in the grace of God and in intimate union with Him, with the inestimable gift of perseverance.

Do not truly religious souls hold first rank among those blessed dying souls? O how happy at the hour of death is the fervent Religious of Our Lady of Charity! Detached from everything, she clings only to her celestial Spouse, and here at last is the moment of Eternal and perfect union. Her glance already fixed on Heaven, gazes no more upon this earth, where nothing occasions her regret. The peace of Jesus beams on her brow. A humble but firm confidence based less upon her works than upon her love of her Divine Spouse, inundates her soul with sweetest consolations. Often perhaps during her lifetime, the care of keeping her conscience pure and free from stain has caused her many fears and anxieties; but now, without presuming on herself, and giving glory to God for everything, she sees herself enriched with treasures and merits which, scattered over a long life, are assembled before her eyes and fill her with an interior joy which leaves almost no room for the anguish and fear of death. She dies closely united to Jesus and in the exercise of all the virtues that she has long and faithfully practised. Already she reaps in the joy of her heart what she has sown in tears and sorrow. Although dying, and reduced by illness to the last extremity, she has no trouble in uniting, immolating herself to her God. For Him she has lived, for Him she will die!

Being accustomed to all these acts, she joins in them without effort; however little they speak

to her about God, her heart at once becomes on fire and is more and more inflamed.

Lastly, by a grace surpassing all graces, she dies in final perseverance, which is the crown and consummation of her perseverance in virtue. For final perseverance supposes a perseverance begun and it is by the latter that she obtains the former. This happy dying Sister passes from sanctity to impeccability; already her mind and her heart are in Heaven of whose possession she is assured. God gives her a foretaste of Eternal happiness, which ravishes, transports her and from her dying lips come forth words of joy and happiness unspeakable.

Does not such a death fulfil all my wishes and should I not be ready for every sacrifice in order to merit it? Yes, assuredly, henceforth I wish to prepare to die thus by living for God alone. I wish to live of love so as to die of love or at least in the exercise of the purest and most ardent love.

II. MEDITATION.

The Particular Judgment.

"Statutum est hominibus semel mori; post haec autem judicium": "It is appointed unto all men once to die, and after death the judgment." Heb. ix., 27.

First Point.—The soul presented before the Majesty of God: All is over. She has just breathed her last sigh; the soul is separated from the body where it still remains until it is judged. Who can say what disillusions that soul experiences which has just crossed the limits of time to Eternity and suddenly finds itself alone in an immense,

infinite void, where it sees and hears nothing? Fearful solitude; terrifying silence; anxious waiting; the waiting of a culprit. But the Judge does not keep her waiting. Lo! He is here already. On what a terrible thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God and we must inevitably fall into them, when we leave this world.

I will no sooner have expired than I will be surrounded and penetrated with the presence of My Judge. I will not see Him, but without letting me see Him, He will let me feel His presence and impress upon me a lively conception of His infinite majesty and I shall cry out with Job, "I fear God Almighty and in the just fear He inspires, I represent Him to myself as a sea of infinite extent whose waves swell upon all sides and like high mountains, break upon my head and crush me." It is thus that God will envelop me and make Himself Master of me without anyone else being needed to seize upon me? What shall I do then? To whom shall I have recourse? What can creatures do for me? Who will withdraw me from the hands of God? Who will aid me? The Community, the whole Order will pray for me; but what use will these prayers be to me if my works and my sanctity do not merit their application? I will then find myself wholly abandoned to God and myself; to God on Whom my Eternal destiny will depend; to myself, for my only stay and defence before this upright Judge will be my virtues and personal merits. If this support fails me, what will become of me?

Oh! how correct an idea of life I shall then conceive! Oh! how well I shall then learn to esteem a holy and Religious life as it deserves! How shall I appreciate the blessing of my vocation if I have faithfully followed it and fulfilled

all its duties! How desirable and necessary is an exact fidelity, a blind obedience, a poverty that renounced everything, an austere mortification and a perfect fidelity, a blind obedience, a poverty that renounced everything, an austere mortification and a perfect fidelity in the little things will appear to me then! How glad I shall be for having done violence to myself in all these things; for having combatted and conquered my repugnances and natural tastes. How slight suffering will seem! Only that sweet memory of the past will reassure me and be my strength and my defence.

But if, finding myself in the power of God, Who is about to judge me according to the good or ill-use of my time, I see in my life nothing but tepidity, negligence, infraction of the Rule, a frightful void and complete inutility, will I not fall into despair? "They will come," says the Wise Man, speaking of sinners (and how many Religious will be among them) "they will come in fear and trembling." If God were to call me before His tribunal at this very moment, would I not also come with fear and trembling? Could I appear before this Infinite Sanctity, before this Increated Purity, without fear?

O, all ye Saints and reprobate, faithful and unfaithful Religious, who have submitted to this Judgment, what will you tell me of the anguish of that moment? They will tell me that time and especially that of the retreat, is given me only to prepare for that judgment in the light of which I should judge everything and also judge myself.

Yes, O my God, I will exercise upon myself a judgment of justice in time so that Thou mayest pass a judgment of mercy upon me in Eternity.

Second point.—The Soul examined at the Tribunal of God. According to the laws of human

justice, every case should be investigated and the judge can pronounce sentence, only after having carefully examined the facts. The accused is questioned, witnesses called, and he is not sentenced until the case is clearly proven and the conviction legal. God will maintain the same form of justice towards me; I will have to undergo an examination, so minute, so prompt, and at the same time so convincing, that I myself will applaud the justice of my sentence, whatever it may be.

1. Minute: The examen at the same time will be general. In the course of the longest life, from the first dawn of reason, I will not have had a thought, conceived a desire, spoken a word, performed an action, nor omitted a single jot of the rule that this examination will not cover and on which I will not have to justify myself. And as every fault is accompanied by aggravating and extenuating circumstances, there will not be an intention, a sentiment or a view with regard to mine that will not be taken into account and weighed in the balance. As a simple human being, naturally enlightened, as a Christian submitting to the law of the Gospel, as a Religious called to perfection, and as a Daughter of Our Lady of Charity, obliged to labour in a special manner for the salvation of souls, I had different obligations and it is of these obligations that I will have to render an account. My works which were apparently the holiest, will not be exempt from this examination. The scrutinizing eye of the Sovereign Judge will discover in them, without any difficulty, the most imperceptible imperfections, and if He is careful to reward everything about them that is meritorious, He will not pass over anything which might lessen their value or alter their sanctity.

2. This examination, which is so minute and so general, will be completed with inconceivable promptitude. The discussion of all the sins of my life would now cost me infinite care and yet, with all my efforts, could not equal it as I have not a sufficiently clear or present knowledge of my life. Nay, if there were only question of examining all that I have done, said and thought in one day, I would not succeed, as there are so many things which I have not noticed or which have slipped my memory. It is not thus with God; having never lost sight of me from the very dawn of my existence and not being subject to forgetfulness, God will not require time to recall my whole life and the most hidden things that have occurred in it. With a single ray of divine light He will set all my past before me. In my conscience(as in an open book, he will show me all the faults of my life. My soul, no longer impeded by the body, will distinguish at a glance the aggravating circumstances of each of my sins; it will be terrified at the sight of their malice; and especialIy at the sight of its ingratitude to God.

3. Nothing is so convincing as this examination. And its conviction will not be the result of reasoning or conjecture, but of a simple, clear and concise view of my guilt. No dispute, no discussion is possible with God. How many sins, which had faded from my memory will then me shown to me. How many others I will perceive which were absolutely unknown to me and of which I did not believe myself capable? How many of my illusions will vanish? How many excuses and pretended justifications of which I will discover the falsity? How many difficulties and doubts which I had decided in my own favour will then appear only interest, vanity, natural inclination, disguise and perhaps hypocrisy.

What a disenchantment! What a bitter deception for me! What can I say? Although I would like to plead, my conscience would give me the lie, for it will concur with God in my condemnation and in spite of myself will snatch from me that short, but cruel confession: "Peccavi," I have sinned.

O my God! Henceforth I wish to cry out: "Peccavi: I have sinned." Yes, I have sinned, but I will sin no more. I repent of the past; forgive me, O merciful Jesus, whilst Thou art my Saviour. Henceforth I will satisfy Thy justice and yield to the protests of my conscience, so that it may not be my accuser in the Day of Judgment.

Third Point.—According to the examination He makes of me, and all my works, God will pronounce my sentence of Eternal damnation or Eternal salvation. And what He has once decreed can never be changed. No appeal can be made regarding His judgment and a plea or mercy is no longer possible beyond time. To procure a favourable sentence is the important, the only necessary affair in this world. If I were going to be damned! Terrifying thought! How could I have forgotten it so often? and what should be more deeply engraven in my memory?

Let us once more look at things from a nearer viewpoint; besides what is this short time that separates us from our judgment? Behold me, then, before the throne of God's Justice and suppose that after having examined me, He hurls this terrible sentence at me: "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." I depart from My God, I, a religious; I, His spouse; I to be separated from Him for all Eternity! That He should curse me, and with such a curse? and I

am never to be permitted to appease Him? That there should be no hope of my ever seeing or possessing Him again?

Was it for this that He called me apart from the world? Was it for this that He gave me so many means of sanctification, bestowed so many graces upon me, surrounded me with so many helps? On the day of my Profession I became His Spouse, and now He casts me off and divorces me eternally. He wanted me to occupy one of the first places in His Kingdom, to sit near Him like a queen, and lo! He hurls me to the very depths of Hell, beneath the feet of the demons, perhaps beneath the feet of the children, the penitents whom I have misdirected, disedified and who are lost through my fault.

O My God, all this is only an hypothesis and yet I am terrified by it. No, I do not want this supposition to become a reality. I am going to begin now, or rather I am beginning a new life right now, a life of fervour and fidelity which may merit a sentence of salvation and benediction.

Instead of the woeful sentence, "Depart from me, ye cursed," how sweet it will be to hear my Sovereign Judge address to me this loving invitation: "Come ye blessed of My Father," come from Libanus, my Spouse, come, thou shalt be crowned. Filled with that all-pure and all-divine joy, whose ineffable sweetness I shall then begin to experience, I shall then acknowledge that all that God asked of me in this world was nothing, absolutely nothing, and that all I did and suffered, left and sacrificed for Him, was not even worthy to be compared with the reward prepared for me by His eternal love.

If I could still feel any regret, it would be for not having made enough sacrifices for a God so marvellously prodigal towards me. Oh, how I

would then like to offer Him a goodly number of trials and sufferings. Oh, if my soul could return to earth from that tribunal. With what feverish zeal would it not labour for its perfection? With what avidity would it not seek every occasion of immolating itself for God. How diligently would it not endeavour to purify itself more and more from its slightest stains so as to appear purer in the eyes of Purity itself. What I would do then, I wish to do now, with the aid of Thy grace, O my Jesus, grace which I implore from Thy Sacred Heart. Enlighten me with Thy divine Light and show me all that I ought to punish in myself. I intend to take Thy interests in hand and avenge the injury my sins have done Thee in this life. I intend to call myself to account frequently in Thy tribunal and in my conscience to forgive myself nothing in this world and reserve nothing for that moment. "When Thou wilt rebuke me only in Thine anger and chastise me in Thy wrath."

III. MEDITATION.

Hell.

"Discedite a me, maledicti, in ignem aeternum": "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire."

First Point.—What is Hell? St. Theresa tells us in the XXXII. Chapter of her life: "One day at Meditation I seemed to find myself on a sudden in Hell, without knowing how I had been brought thither. It lasted but a short time, but I do not think I could possibly forget it even if I were to live many years. The entrance seemed to be like one of those little narrow streets closed at one end, as would be that of a very low and very dark

oven. The floors seemed to be of foul mud, with an unbearable odour and covered with a great number of venomous reptiles. At the end of this little alley there was a hollow in the wall in the form of a niche, where I found myself confined within a very narrow space, and although all that I have just said was much more horrible than I describe it, it might be called pleasant in comparison with what I suffered while I was in this sort of niche. This torment was so terrible that all I could say of it could only represent the least part of it. I felt my soul burning in so horrible a fire that I could not describe it. I have experienced the most unbearable suffering (according to the doctors) that can be endured in this life by the contraction of the nerves and in many other ways and other sufferings that the demons have caused me; but all these sufferings were nothing compared with what I suffered then, added to the horror I felt in seeing that these sufferings were Eternal; and even all that is little compared to the agony of the soul. It seems to be stifled, strangled, its affliction and despair are so excessive that it would be vain to atempt to describe them. It is little to say that it seemed to be torn to pieces continually, for that might mean that a violence foreign to it would destroy its life, instead of which the soul tears and hacks itself to pieces. As to the interior fire and despair which are the climax of so many horrors, I admit that I am still more unable to describe them. I do not know what made me endure them, but I felt as if I were being burned and hacked into a thousand pieces; they seemed to me to be the most horrible, the most terrible of all sufferings.

"In a place so terrible there is not the least hope of receiving any consolation. There is not

even room to sit or lie down. I was in a hollow in the wall and those horrible walls, contrary to the order of nature, crowd and press upon their contents.

"Everything is stifling there; there is thick darkness without a ray of light and I cannot understand how, although there is no light, one can see everything that might pain the sense of sight. Our Lord would not give me a greater knowledge of Hell; in other visions He showed me still more terrible chastisements of certain sins."

Why does St. Theresa not speak of the greatest torment of Hell? the pain the soul experiences in finding herself deprived of her God forever, her Sovereign Good to Whom she aspires with all her strength and from whom she finds herself incessantly repulsed? Why does she say nothing of the continual desire to possess Him and the bitter despair of never possessing Him?

What a torment! Always wanting, always desiring what we will never, never have. And by a strange and cruel contradiction of feelings to have a horror of what we desire and esteem, as the only good capable of satisfying us. "Is there any suffering to be compared with ever wanting what is never to be and never wanting what is ever to be?" says St. Bernard. But is there a soul who, having merited, by a single mortal sin, to be hurled into this irremediable woe, is not inflamed with love for a God who has preserved her from it and Who, instead of chastising her, showers her with graces and consolations? Fire for fire! For the fire of Hell into which Thou wouldst not cast me, when I deserved it, O My God of Goodness, I wish to give myself up wholly to the fire of Justice, but I will have a greater dread of sin, without which Thy justice would

never be dreadful. I will make use of the mercies Thou dost offer me so liberally so as not to put Thy gracious Heart in the painful necessity of punishing a soul whom Thou didst love so much as to die for her.

Second Point.—The Hell of a Religious of Our Lady of Charity.—But must a Religious meditate on Hell? Can a soul so beloved, so favoured by God, fall into it? Yes, unhappily she can fall deeply into it. All the lower because she was destined to occupy a very high place in Heaven.

One day a holy Religious had a mysterious dream in which he was ordered to go and visit his deceased brothers. But neither in Heaven nor in Purgatory could he find the Religious he sought, which caused him intense sorrow. Could it really be possible, he thought, that such edifying brothers were damned? What need is there to go down to Hell? They cannot be there. However, we will see." So saying, he went down into that horrible abode, searched diligently and found none of his brothers there either. "Great God," he exclaimed, "where can they be?" and he was lost in perplexity. Returning to himself, the Religious was very anxious concerning his dream and begged Our Lord to make known its significance. The following night he was answered: "In Heaven you did not go high enough, in Hell you did not go deep enough—the place of a Religious is in the highest heights of Heaven or in the lowest depths of Hell."

If this is not a true story, it is at least a parable on which to meditate during a retreat. "The floor of Hell," says one author, "is paved with reprobate priests and religious." It is just; they have refused the place which God had marked out for them in the highest heights of Heaven;

well, let them be consigned to the last place in Hell. They have trodden the most precious, the most abundant graces underfoot; let them be trampled underfoot by those who, less guilty than they, should have been saved by them. Graces and blessings have been showered on them and they became no better; now let curses and maledictions be showered upon them. God called them and sought them with a love of predilection which they did not merit and which they despised; it is now their turn to call and seek in vain the God whom they have offended. Let the mark of their consecration which was to have been their glory in Eternity, be a mark of shame and disgrace to them forever.

But if such is the woeful lot of every consecrated soul, consigned to Hell, what will that of a Religious of Our Lady of Charity be in that dread abode? Behold her beneath the feet of those young girls, the penitents with whom she was perhaps directly charged and whom she was to bring back to God. These souls, suffering less, mayhap, because they are less guilty, having abused fewer graces, these souls overwhelm her with reproaches; "You should have led us to everlasting happiness and you have been the cause of our damnation."

"The sin which sealed my reprobation was the result of an unjust and exaggerated correction which you administered in anger. If I am damned forever it is because you were not sufficiently firm or gentle, zealous or vigilant in my regard. If you had instructed me better in the Truths of Religion, if you had prayed more, and more fervently; if, in a word, you had fulfilled the duties of your vocation, I would have been saved. Curse you! You deceived me. I thought you were wise, holy and enlightened, and because I saw

you do such and such a thing, I thought it was allowed and that I was allowed more liberty still, since I was not called to do as much as you and thence began my ruin. I hate you! I curse you! I am your torment, but you are mine too. Curse you, yes, be you cursed forever."

Oh, who would not fear such a fate and be ready to suffer everything to avoid it? Which of us, in the recurring light of this sinister fire, would not redouble her zeal, fervour and vigilance in the fulfilment of all her duties, and especially in the exercise of her fourth Vow. Who would not tremble at the thought of causing the loss of a single soul? If "he who saves his brother's soul, saves his own soul," may we not truly say that he who loses his brother's soul, loses his own soul?

Third Point.—No, the Religious of Our Lady of Charity, if she is really what her name implies, cannot go to Hell, because that is the only place where charity entereth not. "There is no love there," says St. Theresa. What has the Daughter of the Mother of Fair Love to do with it? So the fruit of our meditations on Hell should be less fear and terror, than a redoubling of our love for God and our zeal for the salvation of souls. Yes, the fire of Hell should stir up the fire of Divine love in our hearts and this for two reasons. The first is that Hell is a proof of God's love for us. Truly God must have an extraordinary desire to be loved by His creature to punish her so dreadfully when she refuses Him her love. Now, we do not desire to be loved by those we do not love and the love demanded is measured by the love bestowed. Is it possible, O my God, that Thou dost esteem my love so highly. Oh, far from terrifying me, the thought of Hell

makes me rejoice and transports me with love for Thee, for it tells me of the immensity of Thy love for me.

The second reason why this sight of Hell should excite my love and fervour is that its unfortunate victims, the reprobate, have rendered themselves incapable of loving God as they were obliged to do, I should ardently desire to atone for them and to compensate the Eternal love in some way for the injustice done Him by the damned.

"O Adorable Jesus," I should exclaim with Blessed Father Eudes, "would that I had all the strength and all the capacity which these unhappy souls formerly had to love and glorify Thee and which they have lost by their malice, so that I might employ it in Thy love and praise!

Alas, Lord, these wretches continually devote themselves with all their strength to offending Thee. Oh, that I were as fervent and zealous in praising Thee as they are diligent in blaspheming Thee! Oh that I might at least repair in some manner, the dishonour and curses they heap upon my Saviour! O Good Jesus, these wretches, having received being, life and natural perfections from Thee, should employ them in glorifying Thee, and yet they do the very opposite. But I should and will atone for their defects and do what they ought to do for them; the being, life and natural perfections of the demons and of all the reprobate, belong to Thee, O my God, as a good which came from Thee and consequently belong to me, since as Thy Apostle says: "Omnia vestra sunt": "All Thou hast is mine." In giving Thyself to me Thou hast given all things; whence it necessarily follows that I can and ought to employ the being, life and natural perfections of the damned in glorifying Thee, since I am obliged to employ all that belongs to me in praising and glorifying

Thee. Wherefore I offer and refer these things to Thee, O my Jesus, as my own. I annihilate them at Thy feet and sacrifice them entirely and forever to Thy praise and glory; such is the use I wish to make of them, so that Thou mayest be glorified in these wretches in spite of themselves.

Lastly, the fire of Hell should inflame my zeal for the salvation of souls.

"God showed me souls falling into Hell like flakes of snow," says St. Theresa. And I, I have made a vow to devote myself to their salvation; I have consecrated myself to God for this work; consequently, I can and ought to prevent them from falling into Hell. If, by more fervent prayer, greater vigilance, more austere mortification, I can snatch a single one from eternal flames, will I not do so? If I do not do it where is my love for God? He loves these souls; He died for them.

Yes, O my Beloved, at the sight of Hell from which I would like to snatch every victim to transform them into burning Seraphim, I renew with all my heart the consecration of my whole being to Thee. I confirm and renew my fourth vow which obliges me to wage war upon Hell, to contend with it for souls, and as a true Daughter of Our Lady of Charity, to make that divine virtue with which it is impossible to fall into that place, "where love dwelleth not," reign in all hearts.

The zeal, or rather the passion, of the demons for hurling souls into hell will in a manner be equalled by my zeal and fervour in keeping them from it. No, it shall not be said that the zeal of love is surpassed by that of hate.

Provided that I win Thee souls, do with me what Thou wilt, O my Adorable Master! I give Thee my body, my heart and my soul; subject

them to whatever torments Thou pleasest. As for me, sufferings do not count any more when there is question of quenching the thirst which devoured Thee on the cross! Even if I have to be stretched out on the cross, I will still repeat with Thee, O God of Love, "I thirst!"—"I thirst" for souls! I thirst for everything that can save them.

CONSIDERATION.

The Heaven of the Religious of Our Lady of Charity.

"Veni de Libano, sponsa mea, veni de Libano, veni, coronaberis": "Come from Libanus, my spouse, come from Libanus, come, thou shalt be crowned." Cant. iv., 8.

With what impetuous ardour the soul throws herself into the arms of her Judge who at length declares Himself her Spouse and who by this triple invitation summons her at last to her eternal nuptials? Delicious moment! Delightful embrace! Ineffable joy! How the soul must melt with love beneath the first kiss of her Spouse! O my God! Great God! What! Thou lovest Thy poor creature as much as this! And this Heaven in which Thou dost officially instal her, what can it be when it arouses the enthusiasm of the most enlightened, the most serious and the most learned men to such a point as it has done and still does? Withdraw for a moment, I pray Thee, the veil which hides it from my sight, so that, by a glimpse of it, I too may be enraptured and encouraged to walk with a firmer and more agile step in the way which leads to such a blessed ending.

Heaven is God seen, God known, God loved, God possessed. 1. And first of all, Heaven is God seen, seen such as He is, seen in His essence and in all His splendour, in all His glory and in all His beauty! Ah! if the sight of the beauties of nature and master-pieces of art holds us captive for a moment, what shall we feel at the sight of Beauty Himself, that increated, essential and sovereign Beauty, the source and necessary cause of all human beauty. The latter in spite of its charm and attraction is, after all but a slight shadow of the Adorable and Infinite Beauty which the Angels incessantly contemplate and incessantly desire to contemplate further. To see God! Oh! what happiness! And this happiness awaits me. One day, perhaps before long, this will be the reward of my efforts. How I should make haste to merit it! What, such a reward for so little labour!

2. Heaven is also God known. We may see Him without knowing Him, without acquiring an experimental knowledge of His power, His greatness, His wisdom, His goodness, His beauty, in a word, all His infinite perfections. The discovery of a long sought truth is a great joy, but with what an ocean of joy will the discovery of "this first sweet truth," as St. Catherine of Sienna says, inundate us? If what we know of God by faith, sometimes makes us so happy here below, we shall be fairly inebriated with joy at seeing, knowing God as He is in Himself, and as He is regarding ourselves?

But let us say in passing, the knowledge we shall have of God in Heaven will be in proportion to what we have on earth. What a powerful motive for me to seek to know Thee and to repeat unceasingly with our Holy Father, St. Augustine,

"O my God, let me know Thee: Noverim te"; and not with the rational knowledge that study gives, but with that experimental knowledge, an intimate and loving knowledge which is acquired in prayer, in serious, profound and assiduous contemplation of Thy works and of all Thy mysteries of love, in the study of my own heart!

Yes, the school where God is best studied, the Heaven where He reveals Himself in greatest splendour, is a heart that is pure and disengaged from every earthly affection, in a word, a heart that is truly religious.

When I know that I am called to see and to know God, how can I find the slightest pleasure in seeing and knowing the nothings of earth? No, my infinite God, I desire to see and know naught but Thee alone. All that is not Thee is too trifling. All save Thee is unworthy of me. On Thee alone I wish to exhaust all my faculties of knowing. O My God, teach me to know Thee and to know nothing else either in time or in Eternity.

II.

"Heaven is God loved and possessed." To see God is to know Him, and to know Him is to love Him. How could we have such a perfect and pure beauty, such ravishing graces, such winning charms, such infinite perfections under our eyes, without being wounded by love? How could we see the living Love ond not be attached to Him by all that is strongest and tenderest in the depths of our heart?

It has been said "Man is made to love as a bird is made to fly." We feel only too keenly the need of loving; everywhere we seek an object for our love, happy as soon as we think we have found

one, how soon alas, we quit it for another, which ere long we leave for a third, which does not satisfy us for very long either. And we go thus from one object to another, until wearied and enlightened with the futility of our researches, we realize at length, with our holy Father St. Augustine, that in God alone we will find rest in the supreme happiness of loving and being loved purely and divinely. If God wills that in the pure and holy affections of earth, we should experience some joy, what torrents of delight will He shower upon our heart, in filling it with His Infinite Love? What transports we shall experience in loving intercourse with God Himself? Loving intercourse between God and His creature, i.e., between the living, eternal and substantial Love and His creature, hungering for love as does every human heart. Who can tell the inebriation and transports of such a love? To be loved truly and tenderly by a God; to burn with the purest and most passionate love for Him; to see Him; to know Him; to approach Him, and as near as we want to and fearlessly lavish loving caresses upon Him in testimony of our affection: To be united to Him; to be identified with Him; to lose ourselves in Him. Is not that Heaven and a worthy reward of love? But here again the love we will have for God then, will be proportioned to that which we had for Him on earth.

Increase continually in me this Divine love, O my Beloved; let it increase in tenderness, strength, ardour and generosity, every moment of the day. Let me multiply acts of love to infinity.

Torrents of love and affection will, in Heaven, be the reward of these acts which with a soul consecrated to God should be as numerous as the

breaths she draws. 4. Lastly, Heaven is God possessed. To see a delightful and perfect object, to know Him, to love Him, does not suffice. As we have said, everything is captivated; sight produces knowledge and knowledge love; but the latter in its turn enkindles in the soul a violent desire to possess the object loved, to make it her own, to be united to it, to enjoy it at leisure. This happiness will not be wanting in Heaven. To make us happy, God, who has given us needs in accordance with what He destines to satisfy them, is not content with manifesting Himself, with revealing Himself in His tenderness, with permitting us to love Him and loving us Himself with an incomprehensible love; He gives Himself to the soul without any reserve, He abandons Himself completely to her love, He wants her to possess Him in reality. In the full enjoyment of this ineffable and sovereign Good, enraptured, inebriated with love she may cry out Beloved." "I hold Him and I will not let Him in very truth: "My beloved to me and I to my go." He is mine, my own property! I possess Him lawfully, as a treasure which I have won by my labour, something given to me in virtue of reward and as a present of love. Nothing can take Him away from me. I possess Him for all eternity. My God, I am Thine and Thou are mine for forever! Nothing can separate us any more!

III.

"Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God has prepared for those who love Him." This is all the incomparable St. Paul has been able to tell us of Heaven. Alas! What can the most penetrating eye of faith? what can the

ear of that understanding, always weak even when it is strongest? what can they teach us of God? All the most sublime things that they reveal to us is so little compared with what still remains hidden, that the Apostle does not hesitate to declare positively that it is nothing at all. Ah! the fact is, Heaven is so far from earth! God is exalted so high above man that the latter, with his keenest vision, can scarcely perceive the shadow of the shadow of God.

But those prodigies of sacred science, the savants, the great doctors who, having no other study but God, reveal such admirable secrets to us, and sometimes so far beyond our feeble conceptions, that we imagine one could not soar higher in divine knowledge, did St. Paul forget them or except them when he said: "The mind of man cannot conceive." Not at all; it is exactly in the face of these lights, speaking to the savants and doctors that the Apostle affirms that "man," i.e., every man, no matter who he is, understands nothing of the things of Heaven.

Let us humble ourselves, therefore, not only on account of our ignorance and darkness, but also our pretended light (light which in Heaven will be seen to be only darkness, of our vision, always so limited when there is question of regarding God and Heaven.

Lastly, the Apostle completely crushes human pride, declaring that "it has not entered into the heart of man what God has prepared for those that love Him." And yet to experience the spiritual joys of God's service; the consolations of prayer and meditation, the happiness of communion and the delights of contemplation, the ecstasies, the inebriation, the frenzied transports of divine love and the holy delights of an inti-

mate union with their Heavenly Spouse, all those favours which God sometimes bestows upon souls that are wholly His, is not this enjoying something of God already? "The heart of man" has never yet experienced anything of what God has prepared for those that love Him. St. Paul still means everyone, but especially those who have received divine favours. All that they enjoy is still so little compared with the joys of Heaven, that the Apostle considers them nothing.

O my soul! how can we prepare for such a life? Let us close our eyes to the things of earth and let us keep the eye of our faith constantly fixed on the crown that God holds out to us with a hand so loving and so impatient to gird our brow with it. At the sight of our dear home let us repeat continually, "How vile earth seems when I consider Heaven." "When shall I come and appear before Thy face, O my God?" "Who will deliver me from this body of death?" "I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ."

VI.

For the Religious of Our Lady of Charity, Heaven has still deeper lights, still more delicious joys. "Those who instruct others unto justice shall shine like stars for all eternity." That is to say that, incomprehensible as is the glory reserved for all the elect of God, more incomprehensible still is that reserved for those who instruct others. Compared with the taught, suppose that on both sides there has been the same graces and the same correspondence, the teachers will be exactly what the sun is in comparison with the stars.

Now, what else do we do but teach? If we are animated by the spirit of our vocation, should

not all that we do and all that we are, teach wisdom and instruct souls unto justice? God is magnificent in His rewards; nothing that is done for Him is forgotten. He always rewards a hundred fold. Again, mark it well, this is only the measure of time; in eternity there is no measure in His liberality. Because we have been enlightening souls, He will make us shine before them "during the eternity of eternities," with incomparable splendour. He will clothe us with light in proportion to what we have poured into their souls.

Probably, too, He will manifest Himself to us in greater splendour;; the more we have revealed Him to others, the more He will reveal Himself to us. To sum up: "In His light we shall see light." "And what a light!" exclaims St. Augustine.

Lastly, what joy will inundate the true Daughter of Our Lady of Charity on seeing the souls for whom she has spent and immolated herself every day, saved forever and perhaps high up in glory? The spiritual bond which unites her to them will, in a manner, add all their happiness to her own. What an increase of happiness each of these souls will bring us? If we knew, if we wanted to know all we lose by neglecting our fourth Vow.

O my God, I can people Heaven with those souls, I can increase the number of Thy elect and thereby Thy accidental glory and happiness. How happy I am and how grateful! May my every step, like Thy own, O Divine Shepherd, be solely consecrated to the recovery of the lost sheep. I want to bring many of them to the Heavenly Fold. I do not want even one of those who, in Thy eternal designs are to be saved by me, to be missing.

FIFTH DAY

I. MEDITATION—OBEDIENCE.

"Vir obediens loquetur victorias": "The obedient man shall speak of victories." Prov. xxi., 25.

"In order, then, that the Sisters may be able to overcome their spiritual enemies and one day present many holy victories to Our Lord, they should assiduously exercise themselves in the virtue of obedience."

First Point.—Excellence and Advantages of Obedience. The obedient man will speak of nothing but victories, says another version. In fact, the truly obedient man is a victor; every act of obedience is a victory over his own will and over self, and if it is a glorious thing to conquer on a battle field, it is still more so to conquer self.

To disobey is to sin; to be conquered by the world, the demon or our own passions. To obey, on the contrary, is to overcome these three dread enemies. Every disobedience is a defeat and a sin. But obedience renders us invincible, impeccable. He who obeys does not sin, cannot sin, he marches from one victory to another; every act of submission is a battle won. Why should I marvel now that the obedient man shall speak of nothing but victories? Could it be otherwise?

"Obedience," says Bl. Father Eudes, "procures us inestimable advantages. It defends us from the illusions of self-love, from the errors to which the human mind os ever subject, from the snares the demon is ever setting for piety, from the doubts and perplexities to which we are frequently exposed when directing ourselves. Perfact obedience breeds peace and tranquility of soul. "Our self-will," says St. Bernard, "'is the cause of all our troubles, all our agitations, all our intestine wars, all our sins, and all our disorders; "if there were no self-will," he adds, "there would be no Hell." Obedience remedies all the evils wrought by self-will; it mortifies it, subdues it, brings it into subjection. Obedience is so meritorious in the eyes of God that, in a way, it equals the merit of the martyrs, according to the pious author of the Imitation."

I have made a Vow of Obedience, so I should be that obedient man, that conqueror, that victor. O how many victories can I speak to my Beloved during this retreat? How many of the spiritual enemies that I recognized in last year's retreat have I conquered? How comes it that I have so few victories to speak of and as many or almost as many enemies to conquer? Is it not because I am not sufficiently permeated with this point of the Constitution. 'They should assiduously exercise themselves in the virtue of Obedience." I have not practised, or at least I have not assiduously practised the virtue of obedience.

It is not to the practice of the Vow alone that I am told to apply myself, but rather to that of the "virtue."

"The great Mystery of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin offers us another perfect example of Obedience," says Bl. Father Eudes. "The

terms of the Law excepted Mary from the obligation common to all women; but she converted this privilege into a duty of edification, to teach us to respect the holy Law, not only by observing the rigour of its precepts, but even by embracing the perfection of its counsels."

Now am I not frequently content with safeguarding the precept, the vow, without worrying very much about the virtue and the counsels? This is a great risk, for without the rampart of the virtue, the Vow is in great peril.

It is my duty as well as my honour to tend to perfection; now the virtue of Obedience is indispensable in attaining it; and assiduously practised, it alone can raise me to the heights of sanctity.

"Join thyself to God and endure, that thy life may be increased in the latter end."

In obeying I am sure of practising every virtue, of doing all that God wills, of being united to Him in the manner least subject to illusions. It is impossible to be lost by obeying and impossible to be saved by disobeying. "Heaven will cease to exist rather than open her doors to a disobedient soul."

Let us, then, establish ourselves in this life of holy and sanctifying obedience.

Second Point.—"Qualities of Obedience."—They are all mentioned in this passage from Const. XV. "All shall obey the Superior promptly, cheerfully and with a good will. They shall obey her as their Mother, that is to say, with a daughter's affection, honouring and respecting her outwardly and inwardly as they are bound to do; for the love of Our Lord and His Blessed Mother, whom they should see in her."

Obedience should be general: All, whatever their age, their dignity, their knowledge and their talents, their charges and duties, past and present, all without any exception, shall obey.

2. Faithful Obedience. We can obey without obeying "faithfully," which amounts to the same thing as to disobey; for instance, to do the thing commanded only in part, in a manner other than that indicated or desired by our Superiors or at an inopportune time. We sometimes meet Religious who make a study of following their own petty wills and fancies, in obeying, or rather in thinking they obey. But in truth, they do not obey and do not understand anything about their Vow of Obedience. Such souls are not honest, either with themselves or with God. If they were to examine themselves closely they would soon find that they are doing nothing but their own will and are outside the pale of obedience, although they imagine themselves to be within it. Let us obey faithfully, i.e., let us do what our Superiors command and that at the time, place, and in the manner prescribed or that would be prescribed if they deemed it necessary.

3. Prompt Obedience: To obey promptly; that is to allow no interval between the command and its execution; no hesitation, to go joyfully, to hasten at the Voice of the Spouse who calls us, by the voice of the Superior, the bell or the rule, leaving even a letter unfinished or a stroke just begun. Even this is not enough; in order to obey promptly we must imitate the servant of whom the Royal Prophet speaks, when he says, "As the eyes of the maiden are on the hands of her mistress." And why, if not to divine, at the slightest movement, the intentions and desires of her mis-

tress, even before her lips move, and to hasten to fulfil them?

The Religious who yields only to a formal command, alleging a thousand excuses, almost forcing her Superior to command her to do only what she pleases, is far from this disposition. It is no longer the Superior, but the inferior, who imposes her will. This Religious is very much deceived if she thinks to reap the fruits of Obedience, for in addition to not obeying "promptly," she does not obey simply.

4. Simple Obedience: Simplicity in obedience consists in not giving too much thought to the thing commanded, nor the motive which determined such a command, nor why it was given to us rather than to another; simplicity does not examine, it does not prevent us from speaking simply and candidly of the inconveniences and difficulties we find in the execution of an order, but only in order to be helped and counselled and not to excuse ourselves or to get rid of a burden we dread.

5. Frank Obedience: We must obey frankly, i.e., openly, sincerely, freely, without any subterfuge or reservation, accepting whatever is commanded.

6. Cheerful Obedience: We must obey the Superior cheerfully and with a good will; they shall obey her as their Mother, that is to say, with a daughter's affection—"with a generous heart and a resolute will": corde magno et animo volenti," as Bl. Fr. Eudes says; with the joy and delight a child experiences in doing the will of a beloved mother.

7. They shall strive to obey "joyfully" and gladly, says the Constitution. Yes, if we have a

true sense of Obedience if we really see Jesus, our only Master, and Mary, our gracious Mistress, in our Superior, we will rejoice at every command given us in the confidence, that, in obeying, we are always doing what pleases our Father and Mother in Heaven."

And then we will be far from obeying for fear of being reproved if we do not do what we are told. This thought never crosses the mind of an obedient soul. We are to show even outwardly by our cheerful expression and the promptitude of our obedience, how happy we are to do the will of our Beloved which is manifested to us by our Superiors and by our Rules.

8. Universal Obedience: "Obedience should extend to everything, little as well as great, painful and unpleasant as well as light and easy."

God has spoken, we have only to obey. "It is better to pick up straws through obedience than to perform miracles through self-will," is the opinion of the wise St. Theresa.

9. Indifference: True obedience makes no distinction between one charge and another, between one Superior and another; she only considers one thing, the command coming from God. "Everyone should be indifferent as to the undertaking, giving up, or continuing this or that charge, office, duty or other matter in which the Superior shall have declared her will."

How wrong I have been in seeking means and methods of perfection outside our Constitutions! They contain such sure and abundant means! The faithful practice of this one Chapter XV. would raise me to a high degree of sanctity. During this retreat I will work this gold mine which contains treasures of grace and perfection for me.

If I am poor it is my own fault, I should have drawn upon it more frequently. O my God, teach me to think, to speak, and above all, to act in the spirit of our holy Rules and Constitutions!

Third Point.—Special importance of Obedience by reason of the end of our Vocation—Obedience which is so important for every Religious is much more so for the Religious of Our Lady of Charity. In fact, by our vocation, we are called upon to command, if not our Sisters, at least in the different classes of children confided to our care. We should, therefore, be able to command. Now, according to the learned author of the Imitation: "No one can safely command but one who has first learned to obey.'

In obedience, we learn by experience what is trying in such a method of commanding, that another method makes a good impression and excites generous efforts in the way of well-doing. The Religious whose authority is most trying and almost frequently disputed are generally souls who have not practised Obedience very well. If we want our children to be submissive, we must of necessity be models of this virtue ourselves, for (this is a fact verified by the experience of our first Mothers) if a Religious in the Community is not perfectly faithful, the effects of this disorder are felt in the Class, where we find faults of the same kind reproduced, even when thy know nothing of what happened in the Community. What motives for making fervour and obedience reign amongst us!

In fine, it is a fact evident to every observant soul; a mistress who is not guided by Obedience, who acts contrary to the intentions of her Superior, or simply is not on good terms with her, whatever other talents or virtues this Religious may

possess, will have but a mediocre success in all her undertakings. She will frequently experience the same difficulties in governing as she causes her Superiors.

Let us respect authority wherever we find it, if we want it to be respected in ourselves. Let us treat our Superiors exactly as we would like our subordinates to treat us. Before complaining of their indocility, make sure that it is not a punishment for our own.

Whilst an intelligent and educated Religious does not succeed in a charge, we often find another of ordinary intelligence making a marvellous success. The fact is, that the first, according to the author of the Imitation, "in withdrawing herself from Obedience withdraws herself from the grace" which the second merits and obtains by her submission. Now, without God's grace we can do nothing, especially in the work of converting and sanctifying souls; therefore in all our houses we should be able to pick up the Religious directly charged with this work by their most exact, cheerful and especially filial obedience.

Alas, do we not frequently find quite the contrary? Do I not see in my charge a dispensation from all those little obediences to which no one should be more faithful than I? Do I not allow myself many liberties which I blame and punish in my inferiors? What inconsistency! Should I not do more, and much more, than I exact from others? O my God, give me the true spirit of Obedience and grant that henceforth my whole life may be a perfect and continuous act of Obedience!

Instruction of the Very Honoured Mother Mary Angelica de Balde on Religious Obedience.

Obedience to be perfect should be prompt, holy and blind. It requires a great deal of labour to reach this point; but truly, the peace, the repose we enjoy when we have attained that degree of Obedience, which makes us wholly indifferent, is well worth the trouble taken to attain it. We can never be deceived in Obedience. "We are happy," says the Prophet Baruch, "'because we have learned what things are pleasing to God."

Since in Obedience, we are sure of doing the Will of God, let us make a complete sacrifice of our will to Him; it is this perfect Obedience which will make our actions meritorious. We know the reply Our Lord made to Isaias when the Prophet said: "Lord, we have humbled ourselves before Thee and Thou hast not seemed to notice it, we have fasted and Thou hast not heard us." "Because," replied our Lord, "your own will is in your fast." Let us beware of a similar reproach.

Our Superiors hold the place of God towards us, we should listen to them with profound respect and receive their commands without a murmur, interior or exterior. "You have not murmured against us," said Moses and Aaron, "but against God." And God, speaking to Samuel, said, "It is not you they have rejected; it is I."

Our Superiors always have a right to reprove us and it is always wrong for us to complain and excuse ourselves. The censures of our Mothers should be more dear to our humility than their caresses are to our self-love. We should regard and observe the slightest observances with respect. David says that his heart became dry

because he forgot to eat his bread. The petty subjections of Religion is like a heavenly bread which sustains the life of grace in us, if we neglect to eat it, we will become weak and languid in the service of God.

These petty Observances, which seem trifling to us, are, if faithfully observed, like so many arrows aimed at the Heart of God, and like the hairs of the Spouse, they ravish His Heart.

II. MEDITATION—RELIGIOUS POVERTY.

"By the Vow of Poverty, the Religious are bound to a perfect renunciation of all things in imitation of the blessed example of Our Lord Jesus Christ in His birth and the whole of His life." Const. xviii.

First Point.—How often have I read and reread this passage of our Constitutions without fathoming its meaning? To-day in the light of the retreat, it teaches me: 1. What my Vow of Poverty demands of me; 2. What is best calculated to make me observe it.

1. This Vow demands from me "a perfect renunciation of all things," that is to say, a continual act of detachment and renunciation of everything created, so that I no longer consider anything, however trifling, as my own property. If they change or take away what I have for my use, I must not be disturbed nor even in the least surprised. I should use the things of this world as if I used them not "without dwelling upon them or paying the least attention to them"; whether they be rich or poor, old or new, should be a matter of indifference to me as the things placed at his disposal in a hotel are to a traveller who is merely passing through.

"Every object, little or great, that is not God," says Father Tauler, "lowers you, unknown to yourself, and turns you from the right path and from God." To be perfect this "renunciation" should extend to 'everything,' little as well as great."

How far I would be from the spirit of the Rule if I would make myself proprietor and mistress in my charge; if I give or refuse at will the things of which I only have the care, with the charge of distributing them without any other consideration than that of each one's need. This renunciation must be perfect. It is hard not to regard, as somewhat our own, the things which long use or a prolonged stay in the same charge, place continually under our eyes and in our hands, and of which we alone have the care and responsibility. Do we regard in the same way the things which our industry and labour have procured for an office? If not, we have not attained that "perfect renunciation" demanded by our Constitution. Let us meditate again upon this Constitution XVIII.; it will show us the divine ideal that we should strive to realize by placing before our eyes "the blessed example of Our Lord Jesus Christ," first of all in His birth, sublime lesson of poverty. Let us go over and over this lesson and engrave it deeply upon our mind and still more deeply upon our heart. Bethlehem, that is a stable, a crib (a manger for animals) says Boussuet; straw, poor swaddling clothes (borrowed perhaps as his shroud was later on) and that is all the Gospel mentions. It speaks neither of food, fire nor bench; this is poverty.

The life of Our Spouse corresponds with His birth; He suffers from hunger, thirst, heat and cold; He travels barefoot, sleeps in the open air and on the bare ground. "The foxes have holes

and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has not where to lay His head." How often since I espoused this Divine Pauper have I been hungry and thirsty with Him? How often have I suffered as much as He did from cold and heat? How often have I slept on the bare ground? Shame! Yes, shame upon me! I have complained, murmured perhaps, when anything was wanting. And what precautions against cold, heat, illness! What delicacy for a pauper! Should I be the Spouse of the poorest of paupers if I wish to want for nothing? And does it become lips that have pronounced the Vow of Poverty to complain of the effects of that Vow? Oh, if complaints should sometimes escape me, should it not be when I am too well treated, when I have everything I need, when I cannot feel, in effect, that I am a Spouse of the poor Jesus, by suffering for love of Him? I call myself a pauper and a lover of poverty, and when the true friends and inseparable companions of that virtue present themselves, viz., hunger, thirst, suffering, abjection, contempt, I will not receive them or else I receive them without any evidence of esteem or love! What inconsistency!

Prostrate at Thy sacred feet, O my Jesus, King and perfect Model of the truly poor, I beseech Thee in the name of Thy poverty to give me the spirit of that Virtue, a horror of the comforts and conveniences of life and an ardent desire to copy the example of detachment Thou hast given us.

Second Point.—"Being King of Heaven and earth, He became poor to enrich us with His grace, and in order to cover us with a robe of glory, He would die naked on the Cross." Const. xviii.

Jesus taught us poverty not only in His birth and life, but also in death. How closely Calvary corresponds with Bethlehem and the Cross with the Crib! What perfect renunciation from the womb of Mary to the tomb! "Being King of Heaven and earth, He became poor to enrich us with His grace." He lived in poverty, in the privation of all that men seek to make life easy, in narrow circumstances: He labours to earn the bread which nourishes Him, He, the living Bread that came down from Heaven! After thirty-three years of labour, is He less poor?

Look, Religious soul! He dies naked! What despoiliation more complete? What renunciation more perfect? He has no inheritance to bequeath; He has no garments either. He sees the executioneers disputing and drawing lots for His robe. Earth restores Him to Heaven just as she received Him. With more truth than Job He can say: "Naked came I out of my mother's womb and naked shall I return thither." It should be thus with the perfect Religious. After her death none of those many little objects which she does not always scruple to accumulate should be found in her cell. Of what use even are so many crucifixes, medals, rosaries and pictures? Everywhere we go we find the Crucifix and a picture of the Blessed Virgin; that is enough to excite us to love and devotion.

The crucifix of our Profession should suffice, so often we have sung: "O come, come to my heart, Thou, my sole wealth, Thou Whom in the day of my espousals, I received for my sole possession."

Our silver heart should take the place of medals and since we can only say one Rosary at a time, why have several? Let us be able to say

with Blessed Father Eudes: "Jesum volo, nil amplius": "I want Jesus and I want naught but Jesus."

We must renounce not only exterior things, but the Constitution gives us to understand this by giving us Our Lord Jesus Christ for our model, saying: "Being King of Heaven and Earth, He became poor and in order to cover us with a robe of glory, He would die naked on the Cross." See on the one hand what He leaves, on the other what He takes up. We must renounce all honour, all glory, reputation, esteem, every attachment and every natural affection, our relatives, our friends, all the goods of mind and heart, which are more dangerous for us than those of the body. "It is a high degree of the virtue of poverty," says St. Bonaventure, "to quit the things of earth; a higher degree to quit one's friends whether secular or spiritual; a very high degree to quit self, that is to say one's own judgment, self-love and self-will. "Jesus Christ," adds the holy doctor, "had all these degrees: "Reliquit, seipsum, sua, suos": "He left Himself, His possessions, His own people."

And from the King of Heaven "Homo factus est": He became Man, He became poor. He was not poor. He was God. By nature, by rank, He was rich; He was wealth and plenty, but by choice and especially by love, He became poor. I, on the contrary, was poor of myself and by necessity, that was my condition. "Nihil Habemus praeter peccatum," says Bl. Father Eudes. We have nothing but sin. Sin! What a sorry misery! And I wanted "to become rich" by adding other miseries to my native misery, without seeing that thereby I was becoming poorer and poorer and destitude of every real good in the eyes of

God. Henceforth in order to become truly rich, I must now despoil myself of all these futile and deceitful goods; the less of them I have the richer I will be, for the more room there will be for the real and solid goods, the grace which Jesus has merited for me in His poverty.

By despoiling myself of all things, I will render myself worthy to be covered with that robe of glory which He purchased for me "by dying naked on the Cross." "How eager I should then be to become poor," to retrench more and more until I have nothing left, nothing but God. If love despoils me thus, the work will be quickly and well done, for love is an agreeable thief which carries off in succession everything we have, to give it to our Beloved; it ends by carrying off ourselves to hide us in the bosom of our Beloved. Let us love, therefore, and we will soon be poor; now is the time to repeat the beautiful words of St. Augustine, "Ame et fac quod vis": "Love and do what you will."

Third Point.—Like every other virtue, poverty must be considered from the viewpoint of our work. We live in the midst of poor children; our duty is to make them love their condition and patiently endure the mortification it entails. Without virtue, the privation of the material joys which fortune procures, coarse food, poor clothing, a hard bed, assiduous labour, etc., we experience it every day (especially with those who belong to the Third Order) presents real difficulty. Even with the spirit of mortification, these difficulties always remain sacrifices all the harder to nature because they recur every day.

Now, what would these poor children do if they saw those whom they call their mothers

wanting for nothing. They would think (and perhaps say) that it is easy to preach poverty and mortification when you do not suffer from it.

Let us, therefore, be practically poor among the poor. Let us love to want for something and not be afraid to let it be seen. Let us not have any rare or superfluous object for our use; this is the spirit of our Rule. Let us prefer old and patched habits to new ones; in a word, let us be poor indeed; let us display, not with vanity, but with a humble pride, a poverty which we love and which we wish to make others love.

If Obedience permits us, Oh let us be glad to despoil ourselves for these dear children. What does not a natural mother do for her child? Our devotedness and readiness for sacrifice in behalf of our adopted children should as far surpass theirs as grace does nature. It sometimes takes so little to make them happy, or bring them to a better frame of mind when they are ill or ill-disposed.

The exact observance of poverty will give us a right to exact a greater mortification of these souls. Our words will have more weight when sustained by the power of example. When they see us poor they will accept their own poverty more willingly.

If our Lord had come to teach poverty in the enjoyment of plenty, would His lessons have borne such beautiful fruit? But He knew that if words touch the heart, example wins it. From being King of Heaven and earth, He became poor. O my Jesus, poor for my sake, I beseech Thee to despoil me interiorly of all that is not Thee. I desire to possess Thee alone.

Can a religious soul desire any possession other than the Sovereign God? "A heart for whom God does not suffice, is too avaricious," says

St. Augustine. Should not our Beloved be our wealth, our treasure? Would we be so foolish as to be attached to trifles, after having left all for Him? St. Magdalen de Pazzi saw many Religious damned, says St. Ligouri, for faults against poverty, and especially for vanity in dress.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, in a letter to St. Augustine, relates that a Monastery of Thebaid, composed of two hundred Religious, was not observing poverty. One of them who had remained faithful was chosen by St. Jerome to warn her Superior to reinforce regular observance under pain of chastisement. She did so and was laughed at. St. Jerome appeared to her a second time and ordered her to repeat the admonition and leave the Monastery if it were not heeded. She obeyed, and as the warning was still unheeded, she left the Monastery, which immediately toppled over, burying the Religious beneath its ruins.

In sickness, as in health, we must remember that we have made a Vow of Poverty. It is unfortunately only a too common occurrence to meet Religious who, in the slightest indisposition and still more in illness, wish to be treated as well and perhaps better than if they were living in the midst of wealth. And yet we do not make a vow to be poor only in health; and infirmity, old age or sickness do not dispense us from the Vow.

Our Customs give us to understand this when it says, "It does not become poor Religious to have recourse to rare and costly remedies." Our Divine Spouse was never poorer than in His last moments.

O my poor Jesus, give me, I pray Thee, the grace to live and die like Thee, poor and destitute. I desire nothing but Thee, let me despise and cast

away everything else and say with mind and heart: "Jesum volo, nil amplius": "I want Jesus and I want nothing else."

III. MEDITATION—CHASTITY.

"Qui diligit munditiam, propter gratiam labiorum suorum habebit amicum Regem": "He that loveth cleanness of heart for the grace of his lips, shall have the King for his friend." Prov. xxii., 2.

First Point.—It is needness to say how strictly the Sisters are bound to this virtue, says Const. XVI. speaking of Chastity, i.e., they should be so grounded in this virtue and so far exceed their obligation to practise it, that it should be superfluous to remind them of it.

They should aspire not only to Chastity, but to the very essence and quintessence of Chastity. Out of respect for this virtue and for fear of wounding it, we must not even mention its obligations. Like humility, it is sullied by the very mention of it, so we must almost ignore it in order to prastise it perfectly.

"Suffice it to say that they should live, breathe and sigh for their heavenly Spouse alone, in all propriety, purity, cleanliness and holiness of mind, of body, of word, of behaviour and of act, living a spotless and angelic life." Const. XVI.

Live, breathe, and sigh for my Heavenly Spouse alone, i.e., think of Him alone, converse with Him or of Him, find rest and be content with Him alone; in a word, to love Him alone in all things and all things in Him. If I still retain in my heart a slight affection or attachment which robs me of my interior liberty and inclines my thoughts towards any creature (even though

she be holy and perfect), if I eagerly desire or seek any one's company, I cannot truly say that I live, breathe and sigh for my heavenly Spouse alone. My heart must be perfectly free and void of everything that is not God, so that the exterior, reflecting the interior, may breathe propriety, purity, cleanness and holiness of body as of soul, or word as of thought, of behaviour and of act, of deed as of word, living a spotless and angelic life.

Everything that would seem unworthy and unbecoming in an angel, should be unworthy and unbecoming in me since, by my Vow of Chastity, I am espoused to the King of Angels.

"A Spouse of Christ," says St. Jerome, "is an Ark of the Covenant gilded inside and out, wherein reposeth the law of God, and as there was nothing in the Ark but the Tables of the Law, so, not a thought foreign to God should enter the soul of a Virgin."

What pure and delightful joys I would experience in the love of my Jesus if I were careful to live in that eminent purity which my title of Spouse of Christ demands: Spouse of Purity itself. How powerful is this motive with a thoughtful, loving soul to tear her from the things of earth and lose herself in that vast sea, that ocean of purity and sanctity in which we delightfully plunge for all Eternity.

Second Point.—"If this Virtue of Chastity is regarded with singular affection by all Religious Institutes, how much more should this be the case with the Religious of Our Lady of Charity, seeing that they have not only to presrve it in themselves, but also to make it loved by the penitent women under their guidance." No virgin should

be purer than the Religious of Our Lady of Charity.

Chosen by an exceptional and wondrous vocation to rebuild the ruins made in souls by the vice opposed to purity, she should preach this angelic virtue by everything about her, and diffuse a perfume of innocence and sanctity which may raise souls to God.

The very sight of her should be like an apparition of virginity, an invitation to the angelic life. She, more than any other Spouse of Christ, should vigilantly guard her Chastity, surrounding it with a rampart of prayer and humility, obedience and mortification.

A soul that does not pray is a soldier unarmed in the midst of enemies. God humbles the proud soul by allowing her to fall into shameful faults. According to St. Bernard and St. Gregory, it is impossible for a Religious to be chaste if she is not obedient. Lastly, if we neglect mortification, we throw every gate open to the enemy.

"They have not only to preserve it in themselves, but also to make it loved by the penitent women under their guidance."

Now, how can we make such a virtue loved by souls still sullied with impurity and who understand chastity so little that they scarcely believe it possible. Poor souls, wounded and blind as they are, they need the spectacle of a purity preserved intact, living and working beside them, to open their eyes to the beauty, charm and joy of this heavenly virtue. The first means of making them love it is to preserve it in ourselves in all the delicacy of its bloom, in all its splendour. Magdalen was confided to the Virgin of Virgins after her conversion; we too must be the purest of the pure, the most virgin of virgins; in the first

place, so as not to be sullied by contact with these new Magdalens, and in the next place, to purify them, to virginize them, so to speak—if we may coin a word.

Yes, let everything about me be pure—body, mind and soul; acts, thoughts and affections; my two-fold title, Spouse of Jesus, King and model of Virgins, and Daughter of Our Lady of Charity, imperiously demand it. My white habit constantly reminds me of the purity necessary to follow in the footsteps of the Lamb and the vigilance I must exercise so as not to sully my heart in the miry paths from which I am to withdraw stray souls. In order to remind us that these sentiments should be deeply graven in our hearts, our Blessed Founded wished a lily branch to be engraven on our silver heart. O my Jesus! Infinite Purity, Thrice Holy God, I realize, I think, in the wondrous light of this retreat, the eminent purity, the high sanctity to which Thou hast deigned to call me; but I see, too, how far I am removed from it, how negligent I have been in preserving the purity our divine union demands. What dust I must remove from my soul! O sweet Virgin Mother, aid me in this work of purification, ground me in that perfect Chastity which I so ardently desire.

Third Point.—"Those Sisters who shall be appointed to instruct the Penitents shall be very circumspect on this point. They shall be careful never to speak to them, whether directly or indirectly, of sins contrary to chastity." Const. XVI.

Here we have the spirit of Our Blessed Founder who would have us omit passages openly referring to this vice, when reading in the Refectory. Let us scrupulously observe his recommendation on this point, and in our instructions,

never speak directly or indirectly of the vice we are combatting in souls. Let us never allow them to speak to us of their past life, even when they come to us for direction. Let us leave everything concerning this matter to their Confessor.

Our innocence must be so perfect that we are in a way ignorant and indeed we should always speak and act as if we were really ignorant of this vice. Let us even avoid speaking too frequently of the angelic virtue. Let us not do so inopportunely nor without apparent reason. Let us wait until some Feast of the Church or some spiritual reading furnish an occasion.

This circumspection will speak better than the best exhortations. The penitents, whatever they may be, are not easily mistaken and give more thought to actions than to words; here, especially silence is eloquent and persuasive. Experience verifies it; a penitent who evinces a particular affection for a mistress on account of her readiness to listen to her confidences, will, however, have a higher esteem for the virtue of one who is more reserved and strict upon this point.

Perhaps these confidences may sometimes seem useful, necessary even, to console the poor children and to do them good. Let us not be caught in this snare; sometimes what unburdens the heart burdens the conscience; besides a special grace is attached to exact observance of the Rule and this grace contributes much more efficaciously to the conversion of souls than anything we might say to them. Besides, we should rather help them to forget a guilty past than furnish them an occasion of recalling it without profit.

Lastly, let us see that everything around us breathes perfect purity, let us not allow any picture or book that does not incline to this admirable virtue. Let us forbid the children every de-

monstration which savours ever so slightly of familiarity, frivolity or passion. Let everything in our looks, in our behaviour and in our words preach respect and love of purity. The Religious who would be negligent on this point would soon cease to do good to souls and to fulfil her vocation.

O God of Sanctity, Thou dost wish me to fulfil the functions of angels with these poor children, and that in my presence they should breathe a sweet odour of the angelic virtue; give me, therefore, the purity of an angel, make me realize more and more fully the sanctity that such an office demands!

Raise me above the world and creatures, above my feelings and above myself. If I must sometimes approach the mire of this vice, let it be like the rays of the sun which, in lighting and warming the mire, lose none of their purity or brilliancy. Do Thou shine within me, O Divine Sun of Souls, communicate Thy infinite Purity to me and let me transmit it to the hearts which come in contact with me.

V. CONSIDERATION.

The Fourth Vow.

"Messis quidem multa, operarii autem pauci": "The harvest is great, but the labourers are few." Luke x., 2.

I.

"In addition to the three Vows of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience, they shall make a fourth, viz., to dedicate themselves as far as Obedience shall require it of them, to the conversion and instruction of penitent girls and women who shall put themselves of their own accord under their guidance." Const. XIV.

Every Christian, although he has not made the Vows, is obliged to preserve Chastity according to his state, and to practise Obedience to his lawful Superiors. So, too, for each of the faithful there is a moral obligation to labour for the salvation of his neighbour according to the means placed at his disposal by Divine Providence.

Just as our vows bind us to an obedience, Poverty and Chastity, quite superior to the obedience, poverty and chastity common to all the faithful, so does our fourth Vow equally bind us in a more rigorous manner to labour for the salvation of souls.

Having pledged myself of my own free will and by vow, i.e., by a solemn promise made to God with the intention of solemnly binding myself, I would be sadly mistaken if I thought that the zeal of fervent Christians or even Religious who have not made this Vow would suffice for me.

By this fourth Vow I have linked my salvation with that of poor fallen souls; I could not save myself without labouring with all my strength to save them; above all, I could not be perfect without absolutely doing my utmost to make them pleasing to God; I cannot forget or violate this Vow without sin, and grave sin. Whether I be in one charge or another, directly or indirectly employed with souls, my vow remains the same and binds me just as rigorously.

If my charge does not bring me into direct intercourse with the children, I should be even more preoccupied with it, because I am in greater danger of forgetting it, or at least there is greater risk of my putting zeal for my charge before zeal for souls, the interests of the Community before the interests of the children. The Community exists for souls and we would reverse the order

if we would seek the material prosperity of the house at the expense of the welfare of souls or the convenience of the Sisters at the expense of the well-being of the children."

To do good to souls, they must see that we put them before self, that we can suffer and forget ourselves for them, and above all, sacrifice self gladly. "Self" is essentially opposed to my vocation.

But if I am not directly employed with souls, I can labour none the less for their salvation; the House has no other end; it exists only for this; to labour for the House, to serve it in any way whatever, is to labour for souls and serve them, with less consolation, perhaps, but also with less responsibility and danger. I would be very guilty if, being in the Community and engrossed in my charge, I gave no thought to the saving of fallen souls and did not do everything for their conversion, who always, and in all things should be the peculiar end of my thoughts, my prayers, my deeds and my whole life. Have I fully realized, heretofore, how I am pledged to souls? How my fourth Vow dedicates me to this Apostolic work? consecrates me to this all-divine employment?

"O Jesus, zealous for souls, ardent in procuring the salvation of mankind, imprint, I beseech Thee, the sentiments of Thy ardent zeal and charity for the salvation of souls in the hearts of all Christians, but especially in the hearts of the Religious of Our Lady of Charity!

II.

In making a vow to dedicate myself to the conversion of souls, I also dedicate myself to their instruction. Indeed, it may be remarked that the downfall of these poor penitents generally results from their ignorance of our holy Religion. How

often we hear them say, when they have been instructed: "Oh, if I had only known what I know now! Yes, if they had known what God is, what they owe to God, to their neighbour and to themselves, they would perhaps be less guilty. For these wayward hearts we must say with our indulgent Saviour: "Pater dimitte illis; non anim sciunt quid faciunt": "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Our vocation demands that we should be capable of instructing them or at least make ourselves so. Instruction is the means of conversion and one of our first duties towards the penitents and other persons under our direction. So a Religious of Our Lady of Charity is not permitted to be nor to remain ignorant. Holiness of life does not suffice; she must also have the ability to bring the work to which she has consecrated herself to a successful issue. To be good for herself is all right, but when we have charge of others, we must be good for them too; which, first of all, supposes that we are capable of teaching them the truths, duties, virtues and practices of the Christian life.

St. Leonard of Port Maurice bewailed the ignorance of certain Religious: "Great is the ignorance of certain Religious," he said. "Ask them what their Rules are, what are the obligations of their Profession, what they promised God by their Vows, they cannot tell you. Nay, more, having questioned some of them myself on the principal Mysteries of Faith, they shrugged their shoulders and could allege no excuse for their ignorance except that they had never been taught. Incredible disorder and one that should be mourned in tears of blood!" What should this Saint say of a Religious of Our Lady of Charity ignorant of her duties?

Every religious should be capable of teaching at least the ground work of the Theological Virtues, the principal Mysteries of Religion and the dispositions requisite for the reception of the Sacraments. And we must not be content with the instruction strictly necessary to satisfy the obligation of our Fourth Vow; we should study. Oh, if you want to have the fulness of Divine Science, says our holy Father, St. Augustine, hear what the Apostle says: "Love is the fulfilment of the Law; so there is no excuse; sound your heart and if you find divine love therein you will find also the fulness of knowledge." This morning we said: "Let us love and we will soon be poor." Now we may say just as truly: "Let us love and we will soon be learned."

Could we all fearlessly endure the trial to which V. H. Mother Mary of the Trinity Heurtaut was subjected? The Annals of Rennes tell us that the demon attempted to destroy this house by causing the Mistress to be accused of teaching many errors in Catechism to the Penitents. The ecclesiastical Authorities were, with good reason, roused and had her examined by several doctors of Theology. Not content with her answers to their questions, answers which were perfectly conformable to the teachings of the Church, they decided that three or four of them should attend her Catechism classes. This surveillance might perhaps have disconcerted us, but it did not disturb the soul of this great Religious, who was so far above human considerations. After speaking for hours, she turned to the examiners and said: "Well, gentlemen, have you any fault to find with what I have just taught? The doctors, on the contrary, testified to her purity of faith and stability of mind.

Let us not be merely a channel which gives all it receives and as it receives it, but let us rather be a reservoir which gives of its superabundance: "Read frequently, learn much," wrote St. Jerome to the Virgin Eustochius, "Let sleep surprise you with a holy book in hand and if your head droops from weariness, let it be on the sacred page." Let us take this counsel to ourselves. Let us instruct ourselves but to instruct others. Let us instruct souls but to convert them. If we are not employed in this sort of instruction we should none the less be capable of it. "We must not desire any charge," said one of our first mothers, "but we should make ourselves capable of them all."

Hence I could not, without being unfaithful to my fourth Vow, neglect my personal instruction and the means which the Rule places at my disposal to put or keep me in touch with my vocation: spiritual reading, instructions, sermons, study, etc. I should not only be a burning, but also a shining light to enlighten souls and direct them to Him who is the Eternal and increated Light.

"Lord Jesus Christ, Light of the world and Splendour of the glory of Thy Father, bestow the light of Thy countenance upon Thy handmaid so that, enligahtened by the rays of Thy glory and inflamed with the fire of Thy love, she may know what is pleasing to Thee and accomplish it faithfully and perseveringly.

III.

(2) Edification. Words touch, example wins, knowledge enlightens, but fire enkindles. To instruction, we must add edification; to words, example. Our knowledge would only prove dangerous unless accompanied by holiness of life.

It must be a holy knowledge, the fruit of prayer and recollection as well as of study. Our silence must be eloquent, our appearance instructive; this method of instruction lies within the reach of everyone and is a duty incumbent upon each.

In our classes, in the various charges where we come in contact with the children, we must edify them, attract them to piety and virtue. We should watch over our exterior, our words, our deeds, and be on our guard against everything which might make a bad impression upon them. We have mentioned this before; under a religious habit there should be very little which might give scandal.

In our interecourse with each other, let us always show our children an example of sincere charity, of perfect condescension; let us never allow a word of reproach in their presence, let us even avoid making remarks before them; in a word, let us show mutual respect to one another, being convinced that to fail towards one is to fail towards all and that we are less sensitive to a personal offence than to what offends the least of our Sisters.

Let us not be familiar with the children and whilst proving ourselves their mothers, let us never cease to be religious; they will love us none the less for it, if they see it is virtue on our part and not pride or disdain. In short, let us keep to what our Constitutions recommend on this point.

3. Besides instruction and edification, we owe souls devotedness, i.e., a complete donation, entire abnegation, a constant and perfect immolation of ourselves. They must understand and feel that in living for God alone, we also live for them

alone, toiling and suffering cheerfully, forgetting self and gladly sacrificing self for their salvation.

4. With instruction, edification and devotedness, we must combine prayer; ardent, fervent prayer which bursts forth from our heart as from a fire, mounts to the Heart of our Divine Spouse and wrings from Him graces of light, repentance and pardon for our Penitents, fortitude and constancy for our preservates.

We must save them at any cost; we have promised God, we have vowed to do so at the foot of the Altar, consequently we are bound to take every possible means to keep our word.

Do I, in the duties of my charge, in my intercourse with the children, in my work, my prayers, my whole life, remember my fourth Vow? How do I stand in regard to these four points; instruction, edification, devotedness and prayer? Could I not do more and be more supernatural in my intercourse with souls? Is virtue always the motive power of my actions? Do I never reprove harshly, angrily and on impulse. Do the children scrutinize me before approaching me to see whether I am in good or bad humour? Do I always speak with that full and entire self-possession which should never fail me? Do I not too frequently mingle nature and grace, impatience and zeal? Enlighten me, O my God, show me more and more clearly how supernatural and divine should be all my actions and dispositions for so divine a word.

Instruction of Mother Mary Angelica de Balde on Zeal for Souls.

As zeal for the salvation of souls is the chief characteristic of our Institute, we should incessantly strive to render ourselves capable of so holy a work. The first means is to labour for our own sanctification; the good works of the just are so many voices entreating the mercy of God.

Sinners are the children of Jesus' sufferings; He bought them forth on the Cross; He loves them; He dreads losing them; He is glad to find some one to entreat for them and appease His anger. God says in Ezechiel: "I sought for one who would put a barrier between us and take the part of the world against me, and I found none." Let us beware lest far from serving as a barrier to the curse of God, we prevent the effusion of His graces by our bad dispositions and be the cause of the sterility of our labour. Let us begin now to labour for the salvation of these poor souls by an entire conversation of ourselves. "He who will do and teach," says Our Lord, "will be great in the Kingdom of Heaven." Mark how He says "He who will do" and St. Luke says of Him that He began to do, then to teach. All that our good Saviour said and did was for the salvation of souls. We are gathered together to co-operate with the Incarnate Word. What an honour for a creature to be chosen by God to co-operate with Him in the salvation of souls; and by His grace to withdraw them from the abyss of sin to make them objects of His mercy!

"The charity of Jesus Christ presses us," says St. Paul. Let us imagine, my dear Sisters, that Jesus Christ addresses us in the words which

He formerly addressed to His Apostles: "I will make you fishers of men—your nets will be the bonds of charity and your bait meekness and patience." The sterility of our labours must not dishearten us. Everyone will be rewarded according to his efforts, not according to his success. Our Lord did not convert all men. All God, though He was, He found souls who rebelled against His graces and instructions. Let us adore His eternal designs and neglect no part of our duty. It is for us to plant, cultivate and water the Lord's vineyard, but for Him to give the increase. Let us strive to become worthy of so great and holy a ministry. Would we not be well rewarded if we derived no other fruit from our labours than an increase of patience.

We are martyrs of holy love. Faith no longer needs our blood for its establishment, but charity demands our zeal in order that it may reign in souls from which it has been banished by sin. Can we think of the grandeur of our vocation without being animated to a better fulfilment of its duties?

Horror of sin should oblige us in the first place, to destroy it in ourselves by the practice of every virtue so that we may give to others of our superabundance, not like the lamp which is consumed by giving light, but like the Sun which communicates light without losing any.

Our charity for our penitents must be meek, humble and disinterested, according to the words of the Apostle, "Put on the bowels of mercy and remember that Master and servant, slave and freeman are equal in the sight of God."

SIXTH DAY

I. MEDITATION.

Zeal.

"Ignem veni mittere in terram; et quid volo nisi ut accendatur": "I have come to cast fire upon the earth and what will I but that it be enkindled." Luke xii., 49.

First Point.—It is not enough to labour for the salvation of souls; we must labour zealously, with an ardent, burning and consuming zeal!

Like our Bl. Father Eudes, I should have a devouring zeal for the House of God, in order to lead thither those wayward souls who have no idea of its beauty or its peace. My title, Daughter of Our Lady of Charity, demands it; for as charity produces and sustains zeal, so zeal reacts upon and perfects charity. This zeal, the fruit of love, or rather love's very self, perfect love, is according to the holy Fathers, a lively and continual impulse, a violent transport of the heart towards its beloved object, whom it would like to make everyone love, if it were possible, willingly exposing itself, therefore, to undertake and endure everything. It is made up of desire, fear, joy, sadness and sometimes a holy indignation.

1. It ardently desires the salvation of souls, the conversion of sinners and everything that might give glory to God.

2. It dreads to see God offended, dishonoured, ill-served.

3. It rejoices to see Him loved and glorified.

4. It is saddened by everything that offends Him.

5. It sometimes burns with righteous indignation against sinners who outrage Him. Such are the characters of true zeal.

Can I recognize them in myself? Do I feel those lively and continual impulses, those violent transports which give zeal no rest whilst it sees good to be done, hearts to be won to its Heavenly Spouse? Am I consumed by a desire to see God perfectly loved and served by all the souls around me? Is the fear of seeing Him despised, outraged, the only one which strikes my heart? Are the triumphs of Religion the source of my greatest joys?

When the spiritual daughters of V. M. Emilie de Rodat noticed their Mother sad and depressed, they would say to each other: "Have we not a conversion or a Religious triumph to relate to our Mother to cheer her and make her forget her sorrows?" And anger, is mine always the fruit of zeal? Is it not frequently the effect of character, temper, immortified passions? I should suspect this fifth characteristic of zeal; too frequently we attribute to it, impatience which results from still unsubdued nature. There are souls animated by a harsh and irritable zeal, who are ever ready to call down fire from Heaven on anyone who refuses to listen to them or yield to their reasoning. To them also, Our Lord says: "You know not what spirit you are of." A bitter, violent, tempestuous zeal was never anything but a false zeal, producing no fruits of salvation.

"Our Lord came to save us," says St. Jerome, "not lighting in hand and thunder on his lips, but weeping in a crib and dying on a cross." Here, as elsewhere, Bl. Father Eudes is our authorized model. "He employed all sorts of means to gain sinners; he looked upon them as sick and covered with wounds. First of all, he would gently urge them to open themselves to him; he excused them; pitied them; sometimes he even seemed to justify them. He spoke to them kindly and tenderly; he made them feel that he loved them with his whole heart and that he sought only their salvation. His charitable efforts were sometimes met with insults and injury; but he was never known to pass the bounds of meekness nor to be rebuffed by the ill-treatment he received. Everyone yielded to his kindness, and great sinners have admited that it was by this means that he won them to God. He had such a great reputation for meekness that public sinners were frequently known to come long distances to see him and go away converted."

With the class of souls we have to deal with, we will gain more by a meek and persevering zeal than by a harsh and passionate one. The proverb: "Kindness accomplishes more than violence," is always true, and according to St. Francis de Sales, "you can catch more flies with a teaspoonful of honey than with a barrel of vinegar."

Give me Thy spirit of zeal and meekness, O Jesus, my Master and my Model, and teach me to act like Thee upon souls, i.e., "Fortiter et suaviter": "mightily and sweetly."

Second Point.—"I have come to cast fire upon the earth and what will I but that it will be enkindled."

Jesus addresses these words to me, inviting me thereby to help Him to enkindle this fire upon the earth and rekindle it in every heart, wherein the waters of iniquity have extinguished it. It was for this work that He called me to the Order of Our Lady of Charity.

What zeal should I bring to so noble a work, endeavouring by every possible means to enkindle this fire in all hearts?

But in order to enkindle this fire, must I not be fire myself, a burning and living fire, a fire which burns in the heart whence it passes to the imagination, looks, words and actions? Is not He who says, "I am come to cast fire," the same of Whom it is written, "Our God is consuming fire?" Yes, my zeal must be a burning zeal.

Here again, our model is our Blessed Founder, who is always represented holding a flaming heart in his hand. In fact, he casts fire wherever he goes, nothing resists the ardour of his flames, he must enkindle everyone he meets and he may, in truth, apply to himself the words of Our Saviour: "I am come to cast fire!" If I cannot repeat them with him, I have not the spirit of my vocation, for zeal for the salvation of souls with love of God and abnegation of self is the distinguishing characteristic of every true daughter of Our Lady of Charity.

"Love is strong as death and jealousy is hard as Hell." The zeal of Divine love feeds only on crosses; it is hard and merciless in afflicting those who are touched by it, as the fire of Hell is hard and merciless in tormenting its victims, and, as in Hell, the torments are incessant, so when love is zealous and there is question of suffering, it never says, "Enough." Like death, whose power is irresistible, my zeal must triumph over every

obstacle without any hesitation or wavering; like Hell, which has never surrendered any of its victims, it must take such a strong hold on the souls for which it wars that nothing in the world may have power to snatch them from it.

"My zeal," says Father Olivaint, "should be an intelligent fire like that of Hell, which knows how to direct its flames; more ardent than that of Hell; nay, more, extinguishing the fire of Hell; extinguishing, bridling if possible, the fire of human passion, profiting by everything, taking on new increase; I should make use of my very miseries to feed this fire and nothing should be able to quench it, not even the waters of tribulation (like the Greek fire).

Lastly, my zeal should be a fire which never recoils, before obstacles; which never rests; enlightening and enkindling everywhere and always; keeping none of its flames for self; ever referring them to God on high; ever burning "Ad majorem Dei Gloriam: To the greater glory of God!" Not self-sufficient, but seeking other hearts to enlighten, to warm, to enkindle and which, in order to win them, is tempered in strength and sweetness to suit their dispositions, a fire which is self-nourishing, self-vivifying and is never consumed, borrowed of necessity from the Sacred Hearth of the Divine Heart of Jesus in imitation of the example of our Bl. Founder.

Being specially consecrated to this Adorable Heart, our Religious family should be a family of souls, consumed with zeal for the glory of God and for the salvation of souls.

"Prove, my dear Sisters," says our Blessed Founder, "prove that you have no less love and constancy in the service of our good Master than the demon has rage against Him and against souls

whom He has redeemed with His Blood. This wretch sometimes spends thirty or forty years causing a soul to fall into mortal sin and damning it.

"Do not, then, complain of a little time, a little effort, a little money, to ruin his malicious efforts for the destruction of those for whom the Son of God shed His Blood. Were you to prevent a single mortal sin in your city, you would do an incomparably greater good than if you were to save it from all the plagues and other temporal afflictions imaginable, for a single mortal sin is a greater evil than all the evils in the world.

Is it possible, O my God, that Thou hast chosen me to enkindle in hearts the Divine Fire which Thou hast cast upon the earth? Will I ever be zealous enough to correspond with such a call? Oh, if I have been wanting heretofore, every moment of my life henceforth will be consecrated to the exercise of the purest and most ardent zeal. No, I will not suffer a stronger or more inflexible zeal than mine in the world.

Third Point.—Lastly, the zeal of a Religious of Our Lady of Charity, to be real, must be eminently practical and must reveal itself in her every act and in her whole conduct.

It should, first of all, lead her to exact and punctual observance of the Rules and Constitutions without allowing her to retrench one iota; make her faithful and attentive: 1. To all her exercises of piety, especially the Divine Office, to the least choir ceremonies and all that regards the service of God. 2. To the perfect fulfilment of the last duties of her charge, whatever it may be. 3. It should permit neither negligence, sloth nor delay in any of her duties.

Zeal has a vast field, especially in the classes. A zealous Mistress should have an eye to everything, nothing should escape her. She should see that he Rule is strictly observed and allow no infraction to pass unnoticed, she should know the needs and dispositions of each of her children; should study the character of each individually and collectively, so as to direct them in accordance with their own needs and not by a general rule which is never applicable to all sorts of characters.

She should not omit her spiritual exercises, but neither should she steal a single moment which should be consecrated to her class. "I think," says Mme. de Maintenon to her Religious, the Ladies of St. Louis, "I think that a Religious who would say extraordinary prayers, who would steal all the time she could from the class instead of hoarding her time so as to spend more with the children, who would deem herself happy to have gained a few minutes for reading and prayer, would not be nearly so pleasing to God as one who, to please Him and devote herself more fully to her fourth Vow, gives all her free time to her children." (The Ladies of St. Louis make a fourth vow to devote themselves to the education of poor young girls).

In fine, a true daughter of Bl. Father Eudes should be always ready to endure and suffer everything to procure the good of souls and facilitate their return to God; she can, if need be, even charge herself with the expiation of their faults, in imitation of Rev. Mother Patin's example. During her illness, says the Annals of Caen, the Mistress of the Penitents told her that a dispute had arisen among them and that she could not pacify them. In spite of her sufferings, Mother

Patin arose and spoke to them with such zeal and purpose that she touched their hearts. Before leaving them, she told them that she would do penance for their fault by prayer, fasts and disciplines. This was her custom on such occasions and every daughter of Our Lady of Charity who is zealous for the salvation of souls, will always imitate her, adds the author of our "Origines."

"When you find an occasion to help some poor soul," says Bl. Father Eudes, "which will frequently happen if you are on the look-out for them, never pass it by. First, ask Our Lord for grace to do so; then undertake it according to your state and ability; give it all the care, diligence and affection possible as to an affair of the greatest importance, as if all the temporal possessions and the lives of the whole world were at stake. And do all this purely for love of Jesus and that God may be loved and glorified in souls for all Eternity; realizing that you should consider it a very great grace and blessing to spend all your time, your strength, your whole life and all the treasures in the world, if you possessed them, to aid in the salvation of a single soul for whom Jesus shed His blood, spent all His time, His strength and His whole life."

Have I fully understood this lesson? Does my zeal correspond with my vocation? Are not its defects more numerous than its good qualities? What a vast subject for examination.

O Heart of my Jesus, Fire of love and zeal, burn me and consume mercilessly, for I am only fit to be burned and I desire nothing but fire. May zeal for Thy glory consume me forever.

II. MEDITATION.

Our Lady of Charity, Co-redemptress of the Human Race and our Model.

"Pares quidem Filium et virginitatis non patieris detrimentum; efficieris gravida, et eris mater semper intacta": "Thou shalt be with child and shalt suffer no loss of virginity; Thou shalt be a mother and yet remain ever a virgin."

First Point.—We must conceive and form Jesus in us. "The Mystery of mysteries, the work of works, is the formation of Jesus in us."

Being resolved to save the world, God could have done so without the co-operation of any creature; He did not will it so. He formed a partnership with the Virgin Mary that she might share with Him the labour aud glory of the redemption of the human race. Now, the order, once established, remains. Most frequently God acts indirectly upon souls; we may say that He loves to give Himself to man only by the hand of man whom He then rewards with a co-operation perfectly useless to Him. There are few souls who cannot say: "After God, I owe my happiness to such and such a one." Souls are, in a manner, linked together; the salvation of many always depends on the salvation of a single soul.

Mary, our Mother, is the first and the Queen of the co-redemptresses whom God chose to help Him save the world. As daughters of her Charity, Daughters of her Heart, do we not come next in rank to her? Do we marvel at such a choice? We should. Our Lady of Charity was astounded and speechless in the presence of the Angel announcing that she was to become the Mother of God! Let us marvel, then, at such a choice, but let us prove ourselves worthy of it.

Yes, we, too, should be mothers of Jesus; we should receive Him, form Him, make Him grow in ourselves, so as to give Him to the world, to souls who expect this of us. First of all we must conceive Him. But how can we merit such a favour? And above all, how can we prepare ourselves for it?

Like our mother, by purity, humility and ardent charity, holiness of life and works. Let us follow our model in the Temple, at Nazareth and watch—see how we prepare to become the Mother of God.

Before conceiving Him in her womb, long, long before, Mary had conceived Him in her mind and heart. Perhaps we will ask with this holy Virgin: "Quomodo fiet istud": "How shall this be done?" The answer is still the same: "Spiritus sanctus superveniet in te": "The Holy Ghost will come upon thee"; in solitude and peace of heart, in the recollection and silence of your interior powers in fervent prayer: "Virtus altissimi abumbrabit tibi": "The Power of the Most High will overshadow thee." It will veil your eyes to all earthly things, and under this salutary shadow, in the innermost depths of your interior "you will conceive God in so far as a feeble creature can; you will understand what He is, what He wills, what He expects of you and has so long been expecting perhaps.

It does not suffice to conceive God in our soul; we must keep Him there by a strict watch over ourselves; make Him grow, nourish and strengthen Him by frequently repeated acts of virtue so that some day we may be able to give Him to the world. "Everything good in me is a delicious food," says St. Bernard—"penance, virtue, and my whole self."

If the whole life of Our Lady of Charity was one long prayer, the nine months during which she bore Jesus in her virginal womb must have been delightful ecstasies and loving raptures. The Novitiate is for us the happy time during which we should devote ourselves solely to the formation of Jesus in us. There would be danger both for ourselves and for souls in wishing to give Him before having perfectly conceived and formed Him there by our conduct. And yet, not the Novitiate alone, but our whole life, must be devoted to the formation of Jesus in us.

All our Blessed Founder's teaching is based on this idea; to reproduce and revive Jesus in ourselves so as to continue His divine and human life. Have I fully realized this in the past? If I enter into myself, do I find Jesus? Have I even conceived Him, i.e., have I really understood Him? Can I say that I devote myself to developing and strengthening Him in my soul? Does Mary find a faithful imitator in me? Were the first years of my Religious life devoted to the formation of Jesus in myself and the reformation of myself upon Jesus? Are the foundations of my spiritual life solid and profound? This I must examine, repair if need be, during these days of grace and benediction.

Second Point.—We must give Jesus to the world. It is not enough to have conceived Jesus, Our Saviour, in our soul, to have developed and made Him grow in our life and conduct.

Mary did not receive this Divine trust for herself alone; it was not for her own consolation that she became the Mother of God; it was for the salvation of the world, for all mankind, that He

was given her, that she conceived Him and bore Him in her womb.

Neither is it for myself alone, nor for my personal sanctification, that I am to conceive and form Jesus in my soul, but also to manifest and give Him to souls. In her Visitation Mary made others feel and enjoy the Divine Presence of our Saviour, but at Bethlehem she reveals, presents, gives Him to the world. Neither should I be content with an indirect action upon souls when the time has come to do more, i.e., when obedience, when God demands that I manifest Him openly, that I give Him directly by the example of a life that recalls His own, by the devotedness that my fourth Vow demands.

Yes, our Mission is to give Jesus. What a wondrous and divine mission! But, then, too, what self-denial, what purity of life it demands for its worthy fulfilment! In her queenly majesty, in her virgin simplicity, in her motherly affection, Mary holding Jesus in her arms, close pressed to her Immaculate Heart, seems to make us understand our sublime obligations. In presenting herself with her Divine Son, it is not self, but Him alone, that she desires to reveal; she forgets self for Him. It is to Him that she wishes everyone to direct his gaze, his attention, respect and love. Her mother's heart would be wounded if she saw a single glance directed towards herself at Jesus' expense. When she appears she does not think nor even dream that she does so; Jesus hides her, or rather she hides behind Jesus.

Behold the perfect, the first Religious of Our Lady of Charity; we have nothing to do but copy. Like Mary, we should show ourselves, only to show Jesus. There must be no question of self;

we must forget self. We should say with St. Theresa: "There is question of Thee alone, O my God, and not of me." Every personal preoccupation, every thought, every memory of self is an obstacle to our manifestation of Jesus; like our Mother, we must strive to disappear completely so that He alone may appear and to "decrease so that He may increase." This is self-abnegation in its full perfection. How do I stand on this point? What egotism still exists in my piety? I love Jesus, but frequently I would like to enjoy Him alone; at least I would prefer the delights of contemplation to works of zeal. I do not sufficiently dwell on the thought that it was in order to give Him to the world that I conceived and formed Him in my own soul; or else, I make self too prominent; I think too much of appearing, I do not forget self sufficiently, nor hide behind Jesus. Is this not the cause of the little fruit I produce in souls? I do not give them Jesus sufficiently because I do not completely disappear; Jesus does not increase either in myself or in the souls entrusted to me, because I do not decrease. This retreat is given me to banish self. I should not come out of it; Jesus alone should henceforth appear in me.

Third Point.—We must immolate Jesus by immolating self in order to give Him more perfectly to the world. Mary, our model, did not limit herself to giving her Son to the world. She immolated Him for the salvation of the human race. On the day of the Presentation, she offered Him to the Eternal Father as a Victim to expiate the sins of mankind, and God, from Heaven above, accepted her sacrifice, ratified it by the response of the holy old man Simeon: "Thine own soul a sword shall pierce." The immolation began, it

lasted thirty-three years and was consummated only on Calvary.

We, too, should have our immolation, our passion and death; at this price only shall we save souls. "As we should continue and fulfil in ourselves the life, actions and virtues of Jesus," says Bl. Father Eudes, "we should also continue in ourselves the different stages and mysteries of Jesus. It is, in fact, a truth well worthy to be remarked and meditated more than once that the Mysteries of Jesus have not yet attained their entire perfection and full accomplishment. For though they are perfect and accomplished in the person of Jesus, they are not yet so in His Members. The Son of God intended to establish a participation and to produce as it were an extension and continuation in us of the Mysteries of His Incarnation, His Birth, His Childhood, His hidden life, His public life, His Passion and His Death. And St. Paul says that He perfects in his body what is wanting to the Passion of Jesus Christ."

Mary, giving Her Son up to death and standing at the foot of the Cross on which He expires, teaches us how to save souls, how to become coredemptresses with our great and adorable Redeemer. Jesus is more than herself; death would be nothing to her compared with the Cross for the Son of her love; she would gladly fly with Him. Even the Cross for herself alone, would be only a pleasure. And yet, she does not hesitate, she gives Jesus up to death, to the death of the Cross; but she does so in order to give glory and happiness, that is, Jesus, to dead or dying souls. Like our Mother, let us give what is most dear to us, let us immolate what costs us most, let us nail to the Cross what we cherish more than self, but without sparing ourselves; quite the contrary,

after being dead to ourselves, let us again die over and over again to what touches us nearest. Let us stand by the side of Mary at the foot of the Cross, ever ready to respond to the call of God, it He again asks more sacrifices.

Only after the death of Jesus did the world open its eyes to the light; only after the mystical death of Jesus in us, by the perfect immolation of self and of all things, shall we succeed in bringing light to the world of souls.

This is no longer merely the recollection, humility, purity and charity demanded by the conception, development and manifestation of Jesus. That all demands self-denial, without doubt, but it is not adequate self-abnegation, properly speaking; here this virtue is necessary, absolutely indispensable. Here everything that is not God must die and be crucified.

If I had fully realized this, would I not have been more successful with souls? If the life that I strive to communicate to them is so scanty, is it not because my death is not sufficiently perfect? If I do not accomplish in myself the Mysteries of Jesus, how can I reap their fruits? And yet, I was so happy, so holily proud of my title of co-redemptress on the day of my Profession. I wanted to save so many souls! Where is my first fervour? I must at any cost revive, renew it, during this retreat and become what I always should have been: a Spouse, i.e., a helper of Jesus, our Redeemer.

(A sure means of forming Jesus in us is a tender devotion to Mary).

"When Mary has struck her roots in a soul," says Bl. de Montfort in his Treatise on True devotion to the Bl. Virgin, "she produces there marvels of grace, which she alone can produce;

because she alone is the fruitful virgin, who has never had and never will have her equal in purity and fruitfulness.

"When the Holy Ghost, her Spouse, has found Mary in a soul, He flies thither; He enters there in His fulness, He communicates Himself to that soul abundantly and to the full extent of the room she makes for her Spouse. Nay, one of the chief reasons why the Holy Ghost does not now do startling wonders in our souls is because He does not find a sufficiently great union with His faithful and inseparable Spouse. I say inseparable Spouse, for since that substantial love of the Father and the Son has espoused Mary in order to produce Jesus Christ, the Head of the elect, and Jesus Christ in the elect, He has never repudiated her inasmuch as she has always been fruitful and faithful.")

III. MEDITATION.

Teaching Life.

"Qui fecerit et docuerit his magnus vocabitur in regno caelorum": "He who will do and teach shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven." Matt. v., 19.

First Point.—First do, then teach. Only after practising for thirty years and with a divine perfection, all that His Gospel contains, did Our Lord and Master preach to the world. And while teaching men His Heavenly doctrine, never for an instant did He swerve from its admirable and holy direction, never an act contradicted His words which were always sustained by His example. Every virtue He preached shone in Him with dazzling brightness. Strong in the sanctity of

His life, He can say without fear of contradiction: "Which of you shall convince me of sin?" "Learn and of whom? Of me, because I am meek and humble of heart." "I have given you an example that as I have done, so you do also."

When recommending obedience, He can say: "I do always the things that please Him." Mary and Joseph are there to tell how "He was subject to them."

And has He not a right to preach poverty? He was born in a stable, His first cradle was a manger for animals, and after thirty years He has not wherewith to pay tribute to Caesar. He is poorer than the birds and the foxes which at least have their nests and dens, He has nowhere to lay His head.

Chastity, which He exalts, shines in Him with such splendour that in spite of their implacable hatred and furious jealousy, the Pharisees who are so prodigal of calumnies in His regard, never dared to attack Him on that point.

"Unless you do penance you shall all likewise perish," He said to the Jews. But everyone witnessed His austerity of life, they see Him on the highways of Judea, barefoot, exposed to the inclemency of the weather, bathed in sweat or wet with rain, preaching the Kingdom of God, without any respite, and after a fatiguing day, retiring to the mountains to spend the whole night in prayer, only to begin on the morrow a no lesstoil-filled day.

In a word, His whole life was the Gospel put into practice; the Gospel living, acting and proving itself before men's very eyes.

Since I have been called by a choice grace to an Apostolic vocation, I must take the Teacher of the Apostles for my Model, I must be animated

by His spirit, imitate His example, if I wish to reproduce the fruits of salvation that He wrought in souls. Like my Beloved, I should first do, then teach, and teach not by words alone, but also by example. When it may be said of me with some truth: "She says more than she does; she wishes to bind heavy burdens on our shoulders; but with a finger of her own she will not move them; whatsoever she says to you, do; but according to her works, do ye not," my influence upon souls would be as fruitless as that of the proud and cowardly Pharisees.

I have already been reminded of this truth many times during this retreat; but so important is it for a Religious of Our Lady of Charity that I can never know it too well, never be sufficiently permeated with it. We must become, we must of necessity be Jesus in order to be saviours, to snatch from the Hell of the world and passion and from the eternal Hell, those poor creatures so dear to God and for whom He desires nothing so much as to be again, through us His Spouses, their Saviour, their Jesus.

Second Point.—"The people were in admiration at His doctrine, for He was teaching them as one having power, and not as the Scribes and Pharisees." Being the Messenger and the Son of God Himself, had He not power to teach men? From His entrance into the world He was consecrated and set apart for that work, the reason and end of His coming amongst us.

And this power which He borrows from His divine Mission, He also holds from the superiority which His holiness of life gives Him. Besides, apart from a few chosen souls, the Jews are ignorant of His divine origin and consequently of the source from which He draws His right to

teach. But, in their eyes, His incomparable virtues conferred that right and gave Him the ascendancy which commanded their attention. An indescribable odour of sanctity is exhaled from His person, a reflex of majesty and authority which inspires respect, veneration and sweetly inclines wills to be submissive. They feel that He is a Master and a Doctor and that they ought to listen to Him.

On the contrary, the doctors of the law, "although seated in the chair of Moses," did not teach as having power. Their rigid gravity, their broad phylactery, the long fringe of their mantles, inspire nothing like the firmness, the assurance, the holy liberty of Jesus. Their words have no weight because "they say and do not"; people feel that their conduct belies their doctrine and annuls the authority which the law and their titles of teachers and doctors, of which they love to boast, confer upon them.

Like the Divine Spouse, I, too, should teach "Tamquam potestatem habens": "As one having power." Being a Messenger, nay a Child of God, the Spouse of the Doctor of Doctors, I was, on the day of my Religious Consecration, dedicated and set apart for that work.

It is still in virtue of my consecration that I am to go to souls, because it alone gives me power to teach. I must not confide in my own virtues, qualities or personal talents, but in the power, the right which my mission, my holy vocation, gives me. But souls scarcely give these things a thought; they do not look so high, but fix their gaze upon the messenger rather than upon Him who sent him. Therefore to the power emanating from my consecration, I should add the power given by superiority of virtue and sanctity of life.

This two-fold power is necessary; for myself I should confide in the first; for souls, I should endeavour to acquire the second.

Only then shall I be able to teach as one having power; not in fear and trembling, but with assurance, strength and holy liberty. People must feel my power and be gently constrained to submit to it. I should, before all else, inspire confidence and love, but also respect, a religious and holy respect. They must approach me as a sacrament. One author says, "Superiors are ciboriums; they contain a host, power." Yes, power is a divine thing; it comes from God and it belongs to Him alone. He confides it in trust to whomever He pleases, but those to whom He confides it should make it respected as a holy and sacred thing.

As a guardian of a part of this power, how have I hitherto exercised it? Have I sustained it by my sanctity of life and works? Does everything in me correspond with that divine mandate? Do I profane that host of power? Are people in admiration at my doctrine?

Third Point.—"He taught as one having authority," but at the same time with a humility and meekness that called forth the admiration of His audience. How good it is to see Him simple and modest amidst the crowd. Everyone can approach Him and speak freely. Even children are not repulsed. He reproved His disciples for wanting to send them away. Never was language more simple and familiar than His. He keeps within the range of their intelligence, however limited. He was the first to become all things to all men, that He might save all. What persevering patience does He not practise with the Apostles? Being carnal and uncouth, they cannot

understand or else they misunderstand the sublime lessons of their Master. And how often does He repeat the same things? After three years in that incomparable school, they still take the Kingdom of God for a terrestrial kingdom and contend for the first place in it. And when our Divine Doctor speaks of the invisible enemies that He must combat, they answer bluntly that they have two swords.

But it is towards sinners especially, towards souls whom the world treated with greater horror and disgust, after defiling them, that Jesus shows a more kindly condescension, a tenderer mercy, a more delicate reserve. It seems as if He feared to humiliate them.

Behold Him with the Samaritan woman; with what intelligent meekness He leads her to make an avowal of her crimes. "Go, call thy husband and come hither!" "I have no husband." "Thou hast said well—I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband." But not one bitter word, not even the shadow of a reproach.

From the woman taken in adultery, He does not even exact that simple confession; though still more reserved, there is nothing but compassion and pardon in His Heart. He does not mention her crime, He does not utter a word that might humiliate or hurt her: "Has no man condemned thee?" "No man, Lord." "Neither will I condemn thee. Go and now sin no more." And this is all.

When the public sinner, Magdalen, came and wept at His feet, He did not repel her, to the great scandal of Simon, who could not understand such conduct in the least. He does not tell her, as He does later on, when she has been puri-

fied by long penance: "Touch me not." Just now now He would fear to hurt her and make her suspect that He felt some repugnance to her touch. He leaves her at liberty to kiss again and again His sacred feet, wash them with her tears and wipe them with her hair. When He speaks it is to tell her and all present: "Many sins are forgiven her because she hath loved much; thy faith hath made thee safe; go in peace."

Jesus would not acknowledge us as His spouses if we were to act otherwise than He did with fallen souls. Our Bl. Founder recommends nothing to his daughters so much as that evangelical simplicity and meekness which should, in a way, bring us to a level with our children. We must speak to them simply in the simple language of faith; like Jesus, we should be accessible to all, without preference or distinction unless for the most miserable; patient and persevering in spite of the apparent inutility of our efforts; to bear meekly (combatting them all the while) with the ignorance and rudeness of our children, which may frequently be excused by their birth, education and early environment. We must keep them humble, but at the same time manage them discreetly; we must reprove them, it is true, but tactfully and delicately; they have been wounded and are so frail. It would take so little to crush them completely; so there must never be a reproach, a bitter or disheartening word, anything which might tell them that we remember their deplorable past.

Here, especially, we must prove ourselves mothers by endeavouring in a gentle, kindly manner and with a truly maternal love, to make those poor souls forget the weight of shame hanging over them. That does not hinder authority, to

be sure; but on the contrary, makes it loved and wins more fruitful submission. What harm is sometimes done to a soul by an inopportune and indiscreet humiliation? It may be plunged into a deeper abyss than that from which we attempted to withdraw it.

Daughters of Our Lady of Charity, let us never apply anything to their wounds but the balm of most exquisite charity.

VI. CONSIDERATION.

Charity.

Constitution XIX., the longest of all, is so explicit with regard to charity that after reading and meditating it, there is nothing more to be said on the subject, which is, nevertheless, such a fertile one.

The spirit and heart of our Founder have truly passed into those ten admirable pages. They contain a doctrine so complete that it is with fear and trembling that we venture to intermingle a few simple reflections with them. May these reflections inspire better ones and permeate us all more and more with the spirit of our admirable and holy vocation.

I.

"Let the Sisters above all things do their very utmost to cherish and increase in themselves that mutual and continual charity which ought to exist and to reign in the House of Our Lady of Charity." (Const. XIX.).

Above all things, i.e., we must be more solicitous and attentive to the preservation of charity than anything else.

Note carefully the words used by our Bl. Founder: "Their utmost." He could have said: "Above all things let the Sisters guard, observe or practise charity." But he uses a word of stronger and more extensive significance. *Utmost* means they must exercise a tender and delicate attention, a constant and voluntary effort, and affectionate painstaking.

We only take such care of what is precious and very costly; not even an ordinary care or even a relatively great one, but "our utmost," our very utmost. This is what we should do to cherish and increase charity in ourselves. We can only cherish and increase something which already exists. Our Bl. Founder supposes that we really possess charity; that we not only endeavour to "preserve" it, but whilst preserving it, to "increase" it in strength and in extent, ever "more and more," without ever stopping, however ardent it may be.

"Let us cultivate that mutual and continual charity which ought to exist." That is not enough —"which ought to reign in the House of Our Lady of Charity."

To encourage us thereto, will it not suffice (if we realize the honour of a great name and what it entails) "to remember that we are called and should really be Daughters of Our Lady of Charity or Daughters of the most loving Heart of the Mother of fair love." Let us love this beautiful name and bear it honourably. In the exercise of our charge, in the quiet of our cells, in the recollection of prayer, at every moment of the day and night, let us love to conceal ourselves in the Heart of the Mother of fair love, our school, our very own, in order to admire and copy her tender mercy, her meekness, her clemency, her compassion, her suavity, her benignity.

Let us study and copy until we can say with our Mother: "My spirit is sweeter than honey." This perfect sweetness is the flower and fruit of true charity. A tree without flower or fruit and charity without sweetness, are one and the same. "They shall study to engrave upon their hearts a perfect image of these amiable virtues," says our Bl. Founder.

Now, when we are studying, does it suffice to read a lesson once? How often do we have to repeat it to grasp its meaning and engrave it on our memory? The more subtle it is, the more application it demands. Now what is more perfect and hence more difficult to our weakness, than those virtues of our admirable Mother. "Virtues, a perfect image of which we must engrave in our hearts." And consequently, how assiduously and zealously we should devote ourselves to this sweet and delightful study?

To this end, let them strenuously endeavour to have and to show a true, sincere, frank and cordial charity to all sorts of persons and especially to one another."

"They should strenuously endeavour," like every other virtue, charity necessitates effort, i.e., the putting into action, the full expenditure of all the strength and energy we have. This is the honeycomb which Samson gathered from the jaws of the vanquished lion.

2. 'They shall strenuously endeavour to have and to show." Moreover, what is well felt is always shown. There are some things whose existence cannot be hidden; you cannot hide a light because it diffuses light, nor fire, because it burns. Neither can we conceal true charity; it is a light, a fire, the burning and shining light.

3. They shall strenuously endeavour to have and to show true, sincere, frank and cordial charity. One would say that our Bl. Founder could not find words to express all the qualities our charity should possess. He sums up all its qualities by saying that it should be "cordial" and spring from the very depths of our heart.

4. Its first, habitual and largest field should be the interior of our Religious family. That sweet and holy charity must stand the test in our mutual relations.

What charm! what sweetness in the relations of the daughters of the Mother of love, if they are worthy of their lovely name! a name which should be dearer to them than all the titles of nobility.

How do I stand with regard to the practice of this virtue? If Const. XIX. were really "engraved upon my heart," would I not be more "careful to cherish and increase charity in myself?" Am I not more affable with others than with my Sisters? Do I faithfully make the virtues of the Heart of my Mother the most habitual subject of my thoughts and my meditations? Alas, too frequently I forget my name and rank as Daughter of the Heart of the Mother of fair love and belie it by my disposition and my conduct! Now is the time to remedy this evil! This retreat is given me to rectify everything that is not right within me, to ground myself in the sentiments befitting my vocation as a daughter of Our Lady of Charity.

II.

"Let them not suffer in their hearts the presence of any spite, envy, jealousy, bitterness, coolness or dislike with regard to any person whatsoever." Const. XIX.

Being daughters of Eve as well as Daughters of Our Lady of Charity, in spite of our best efforts, we will not always be master of our hearts. It is a sea which the gentlest breeze ripples. Sometimes, even it takes so little to stir up a very storm. How easily its sweetness changes to bitterness!

That is to be expected; but though expected, the evil is no less real and its remedy no less important. "They shall not suffer in their hearts any spite, envy," etc. All these feelings, so opposed to those becoming to daughters of her "whose spirit is sweeter than honey," may nevertheless spring up in their hearts, the Constitution seems to say, but they should not suffer them to dwell there for a single instant. We must stifle them, or at least struggle against them from their very beginning." When any Sister shall feel in her heart any antipathy or aversion towards another, let her strive manfully against it." Yes, manfully! such an enemy merits no respect, and should not be repelled feebly, but vigorously and manfully. Prostrate at the feet of God, Who is Charity, let her humble herself profoundly; let her be ashamed of feeling an aversion or antipathy towards a creature whom our great God has loved even to the folly of the Cross! With what fervour and tears she asks her Divine Saviour for grace to overcome this evil. In spite of the struggles of her lower nature, which she should renounce, she dedicates herself to His spirit of Charity.

Lastly, and this is the important point, she acts contrary to her feelings, performing interior and exterior acts of charity towards the person in question. Let us not trust to her own light nor be content to combat singly but in all hu-

mility, "she may discover her evil state to her Superior in order to obtain assistance in getting the better of it."

And if, in spite of her best and sincerest efforts, "she cannot altogether conquer her feelings, let her take great care not to give any consent to them and not to allow them to have any influence upon her words or actions," so that even the person in question may not suspect.

Following the advice of St. Francis de Sales, let her look upon that person in the sacred light of Our Saviour. Let her consider our amiable Saviour as present and living in her soul in such a way that to wound her would be to wound Him in the very apple of His eye.

But whilst seeking remedies for this evil, why not go to its source and dry it up? How little it takes to arouse those little antipathies, which unfortunately, are not sufficiently rare in Communities. A little banter, a petty jest, a raillery which provokes a malicious smile, a look, a gesture, a nothing, suffices to enkindle this hellish fire. Our good Father knows it and formally forbids all that, saying expressly, "Let the Sisters detest banter and raillery even in little things as an abomination before God." They shall detest, that is, they shall hold all these things in horror, hatred and contempt. Now, how can we commit a fault we detest? Not only in grave and important things, but even in little things must the Sisters detest banter and raillery as an abomination before God."

Which of us, if she has any respect and love for God in her heart would do anything abominable in His sight? "An abomination before God." Why the very thought of it makes us shudder. Why, I wonder does it not always come and re-

strain us from a mischievous raillery, a witty but cutting word, or a jeering smile which may perhaps enkindle a fire in the soul of our Sister? Banter and raillery are weapons, too injurious to be used without danger. Better not to handle them than run the risk of wounding many whilst wounding your self. However that may be, all these things are formally forbidden us by these words which need so comment and admit of no reply: "Let the Sisters detest banter and raillery even in little things as an abomination before God."

III.

"Let them abstain from all sharpness, bitterness and temper in their actions and in their words." Bad temper, irritability and unevenness of disposition, sharp words and sullen looks are also frequently the cause of those petty antipathies. Through charity for the souls with whom we live, we must cultivate a meek and cheerful disposition, simple and equable, so that our company may be a pleasure, never a bore. We would always be loved if we were always amiable. In order to be so continually, we must practise self-denial, it is true, but is it not that precisely which is called "practising charity."

"Never dispute very much, especially in important matters, never jest about anything whatever," said St. Theresa to her spiritual daughters. Does not our Constitution require greater perfection still when it says: "Let them avoid all kinds of disputing even on commendable subjects." We may say of disputes what St. Francis de Sales says of dances and mushrooms: "The best of them are worth nothing." The best contestations assuredly are those of which St. Paul and St. An-

thony give us an example; however good and perfect they may be, it is still better and more perfect to avoid them, and this is what the Constitution means to insinuate.

We must also avoid "all murmuring, detraction and rash judgment and all cutting words, such things are the plague of sisterly love." What precautions do we not take to protect ourselves against the plague? How hurriedly we flee from places where it is prevalent. We should take the same precautions to fly from those spiritual plagues which are more contagious and injurious than those which merely attack the body. We must avoid as we would the plague-stricken, those tainted with this deadly disease, the habit of murmuring, detraction, rash judgment and cutting words. Their lips breathe a contagion which we must not inhale and the best way to cure them is to fly from them by refusing to listen to them and remove from them the occasion of cherishing the disease which afflicts them and with which they may afflict their whole community.

O what profound peace! What purer happiness could religious souls enjoy, if they could and would always protect themselves from this plague! In order to do so we would only have to let drop a host of petty inconsequential things, to which we pay too much attention; not to dwell on a word spoken thoughtlessly, on an indelicate act, a forgetfulness, a want of consideration and a host of such like things. Are such things worth dwelling upon when they interrupt our progress Heavenward even for an instant? Ah! we prove that we are little occupied with the work of our perfection when it takes so little to distract us, when what should advance us a step causes us to recoil several or, at least, delays us.

But so great is human weakness! The holiest souls and those who have gained most mastery over self may forget themselves momentarily. "If two Sisters offend each other mutually," our Blessed Founder answers, "Blessed is she who shall be the first to humble herself, to seek out the other and try to bring about a reconciliation although she herself may have been the most deeply offended."

Humility must repair the breaches made in charity (for usually they spring from pride). Frequently an act of the former virtue beneficially redeems a momentary vivacity; and our Holy Father, St. Augustine, says in the 20th chapter of the Rule, "better is a Sister who though often tried by anger, is nevertheless prompt to beg pardon of one whom she has injured, than a Sister who is more slow to anger, yet harder to be brought to ask forgiveness." The important point is not, never to fall (which is morally impossible), but to rise promptly and generously after every fall. This would be an easy matter for us if we were verily Daughters of Our Lady of Charity, and we will be so if we frequently meditate on Chapter XIX. of our Constitutions, and if "Charity is really the Queen, the Rule, and the soul of our life and actions."

O Mother of fair love, enkindle from thy own most holy Heart this pure and holy flame with which I beseech thee to inflame and consume me wholly. May I, too, be a mother of fair and holy love and may I give it birth and increase in all the souls around me!

Instruction of Mother M. Angelica de Balde on Charity.

I cannot recommend fraternal charity too highly. The Wise Man says, "The brother who helpeth his brother is like an impregnable city." Let us preserve the holy union which reigns among us by an ardent charity and unwearied patience. Let us beware of the terrible threat which God makes through the Prophet Osee to those who disturb peace when he says: "The soldiers fought among themselves; it is over; they are all lost."

Our meekness must pass to the exterior; our manner must be affable and prepossessing. Let us always be disposed to render a service to everyone, ready to do and suffer everything, remembering that everything about a servant of God should breathe meekness and charity. Let us profit by all the contradictions we meet with to increase in virtue. Let us imagine that God tells us: "Fear not, it is I who ordain it so."

Let us courageously surmount all the difficulties that we meet with in the practice of fraternal charity. In our works of zeal there is no reason to be disturbed. We should be convinced that, of all evils, there can be none greater than to lose our peace and patience.

Conversation.—Good conversation is the touchstone by which we may recognize a person's sanctity. A perfect sanctity demands irreproachable conversation. Conversation, to be good, must not injure anyone, neither ourselves, our listeners, nor those of whom we speak. Our conversation cannot be perfect unless we practise self-restraint.

It is not enough to govern one's tongue wisely; we must regulate our tone of voice, our every look, action or gesture. The peace of a soul ever attentive to God should be diffused around her.

Let us know how to speak differently to different persons and in such a way that those whom we must refuse may go away satisfied.

Let us beware of two dangerous extremes. Be prudently familiar so as to win hearts, but fly frivolity and indiscretion. Let us be grave and sedate so as to maintain our authority, but let us not affect an air of haughtiness which might repel those whose salvation we seek. Virtue does not love affected manners; it is content to be civil, modest and gracious, but without haughtiness.

Let us frequently reflect on the words of St. James: "He who does not sin in words is perfect." Our words should be humble and meek; we should never say anything against charity, nor to gain praise. If we are praised we must listen in humble silence, which quickly puts an end to such vain discourse.

Let us listen quietly to things which displease us, let us yield in contradictions or contestations with an air which shows neither scorn nor contempt. Let us never seem to prefer our own opinion to that of others.

Lastly, in all our conversation, we should preserve simplicity and religious modesty, taking as our maxim, never to speak of ourselves. (It is folly to speak well and frequently pride to speak ill of ourselves).

SEVENTH DAY

I. MEDITATION—THE TWO PRODIGALS.

"Profectus est in regionem longinquam et ibi dissipavit substantiam suam": "He went abroad into a far country, and there wasted his money living riotously."

First Point.—Behold face to face the Prodigal Son and myself a Religious. But is it fitting to apply this parable to a Religious soul? The Prodigal was young; how compare him with a soul whose condition implies maturity? "Ah, she may be as frivilous as a child and still more foolish," says Father Olivaint. How would she demand her share? How and to whom would she dare to say: "Da mihi portionem": "Give me the portion of the substance that falleth to me." She has made a Vow of Poverty; she has become the portion, the heritage of Christ, her Spouse! Jesus, God Himself is her portion, her assured heritage, she sang it on the day of her Profession, she has so become a child of God by adoption that all that is God's is hers. But this is not all that the unfaithful Religious demands; it is her liberty! Her liberty! She alienated it by her Vow of Obedience. She has given up everything to God and still she demands it.

Then she is more unjust, more ungrateful than the prodigal in the Gospel; she commits a theft, a sacrilege, she puts her hand on the Altar and withdraws a victim offered and consecrated to Our Lord!

But how will she go abroad into a far country? She stays in her Community. Yes, but she can go far away from God, far away from sanctity. See how the poor soul quits the interior life, her Father's house where she experienced pure family joys and the most delightful intimacy, the country of grace where plenty reigned and how she goes to nature, "in regionem longinquam," into that far country, which is farther from her true country than the one to which the prodigal went, was from his paternal home.

How many of my friends who remained in the world are happier than I am, says the unfaithful Religious, and she goes on asking pretended happiness for her passions. Thus "dissipavit substantiam suam"; she wastes her substance, all the graces of her vocation, more lavishly than the Prodigal, though her substance is much more precious; she is guilty of a greater sin, gives greater dishonour to her Father, and brings deeper misery upon herself.

And there came a famine in that sterile country. The bread of the Community is still before her. Yes, but "not by bread alone does man live, but by every word that cometh from the mouth of God."

And yet she still holds intercourse with God; prayer, the Office, and all religious exercises. But alas, they are all fruitless. Hunger, in spite of them all! Besides, God does not give Himself to one who thrusts Him aside. She has another master, a cruel master: the very demon; she has swine to herd: her passions. At least, she has the husks of the swine to eat, i.e., natural pleasures, vain affections.

No, not even that; the very swine thrust her away. She is food for her passions, but her pas-

sions are not food for her . She is hungry! But what is bodily hunger compared to such as hers? How much more cruel is the hunger of the soul who wants God, God, her ordinary Bread. As far as the soul surpasses the body, so is its hunger the more tormenting, its pangs the more severe! Hearken to her complaints. "Ego autem hic fame pereo!" "And I here perish with hunger!" I, a Religious, child aud spouse of God. I, once so happy at His table, I who should still be enjoying those pleasures, I am dying of hunger." How many hired servants in my Father's house? How many ordinary Christians, how many poor women abound with bread and are happier than I am? "Ego autem hic fame pereo": "And I here perish with hunger."

Vain desires! The prodigal in the Gospel can arise, go to his father and humbly acknowledge his fault. In this misery, his hunger, he can find strength so to act.

But still deeper is the misery, and still greater the impotence of the Religious, unfaithful to her vocation. She has no strength to arise, no energy to go, no humility to cast herself at her father's feet, no affection and confidence to throw herself into His arms for she has not the grace to do so.

Will her angry Father, more venerable than he of the Gospel-story, have pity on her? How will she go to meet Him? Is all hope gone? Is there nothing left for her but despair?

Have I, at any period of my life, been that wretched prodigal, that thankless child? What has my life been during this past year? Have I ever quitted the House of my Divine Father? Is there nothing left for me but despair?

Second Point.—No, no, not despair! Lo, the second, the Divine Prodigal, comes! He, too, quits

His Father, demands His substance, goes to a far country and there He wastes all His treasure out of love for His miserable creatures? Pray, Who is He?

He is not the Prodigal's elder brother, mentioned in the Gospel, for the latter was avarious, jealous, complaining of his father's kindness and generosity and condemned both his father and brother. Still this eldest son is prudent; he is reasonable and somewhat just in his complaint. But love knows neither such prudence nor such justice. This eldest son appears in the Gospel so as to show forth to better advantage the devotedness of that other eldest Son who became a prodigal also instead of murmuring, a prodigal the better to satisfy His Father's desires, especially His love!

The other eldest son, the new and Divine Prodigal, is Jesus! "God so loved the world," the prodigal, the sinner, "as to give His Only-Begotten Son!" No, this God, so good, is not satisfied with watching from afar, in sadness, the wretch who is going astray, with recalling him by inspiring him with better sentiments and salutary remorse. He gives, He sacrifices His eldest Son for His younger Son. Behold this Eldest, this Beloved Son, quitting His Father to come into this world. What a distance He travels! What abasement He accepts! He assumes a nature like our own! Behold Him reduced to herding degraded creatures "without understanding" who have become "like the horse and the mule." The chief necessaries of life are wanting in that foreign land. He, too, is thrust aside by those human animals who dispute with Him about the only food He wants—their love, their heart.

What does He do, however, with the infinite

treasures which he obtained from His Father, when quitting Heaven. How He pours out His graces, His love, His blood to the very last drop! How He lavishes it all on the unhappy prodigal who, but for Him, would never have the strength to arise, and especially, what is much harder, to humble himself and cry out: "Pater peccavi"; "Father, I have sinned!" But lo! The Divine Prodigal says to His wretched brother: "And I, too, hunger!" "Ego autem hic fame pereo": "And I here perish with hunger." I hunger for thy salvation, thy happiness.

And He assists, He revives Him, He binds His wounds, as a trophy of love and presents him to His Father, to His mother too. For He has a mother in the divine plan: Mary! She does not appear in the Gospel, it is true, but the reality for surpasses the parable. So the prodigal has a mother, and what a Mother! She, too, sacrificed her first born Son. How she pleads with the Father in union with her Son for sinners.

But how will that Father resist such a Mother and such a Son? In giving up her Son, did she not lay down her arms? What a Father is God! "Nemo tam Pater!" The Father in the Gospel does not give us any idea of what He is. The Father in the reality is more loving, more generous, than the one in the Gospel story! "Deus cujus natura bonitas! Deus cujus proprium est misereri semper et parcere!": "God whose nature is goodness, whose property it is to have mercy and to spare!"

True, the unfaithful Religious who has despised so many graces is much more guilty than the prodigal of the Gospel. The mercy of God but shines forth with greater splendour. How admirable, how adorable is the unfailing mercy

of God! What mercy? Why it is Jesus Himself. Indeed the fatted calf which was immolated is Jesus. That new robe is Jesus. That fatherly embrace is Jesus.

What a feast upon earth! But a greater feast in Heaven. What joy for the Father! And His eldest Son does not protest. On the contrary, He is happy to see love triumph! For He died and rose again, and lo! Now in his turn the dead prodigal has arisen. He is received as a true son, as Jesus. He wears the same robe, the same ring, and united with Jesus, he shares the same rights.

No, he is not treated like the hired servants, but like a cherished son; and now "date annulum." "Give him the ring," says the Father. "Let him be faithful forever." Let him put on his shoes and walk now in the path of Heaven. Let him be a prodigal still, but in a different way, in Jesus' way.

Third Point.—Should not the Religious of Our Lady of Charity be a prodigal in Jesus' way? She, too, must demand her portion of her Divine Father, "Da mihi portionem," her portion of the paternal inheritance and of all that the passion and death of her Spouse purchased for her. But has she not already been told by the lips of the Apostle: "Omnia vestra sunt": "All things are yours."

So everything belongs to her; she is the universal heir of God. Well, let her demand everything and then laden with these infinite treasures, let her quit her Father's house. Let her know how to sacrifice the purest and holiest joys, let her leave her father, let her leave God Himself, God, so sweet in the repose of prayer and holy recollection, let her go into a far country—far from self, from nature, from what she loves most

holily, from her personal satisfactions, and, in that country, so trying to a heart which might perhaps prefer the deights of contemplation to action, to apostleship, let her waste, let her pour out by her prayers, her example, and above all by her devotedness, the immense treasures of grace and divine love which she bore away from her Father's house. Let her know how to endure privations of every kind, contempt, rebuffs, ill-treatment from those who would trammel her kindly efforts. Let her endure hunger and thirst for souls so that she, too, may say: "Ego autem hic fame pereo": "And I here perish with hunger!" O would that she might perish with that blessed hunger!

Like the Divine Prodigal, let her waste all her substance, let her shed her very blood, if need be, in order to restore those poor prodigals, her brothers, her sisters, to her Father. Let her plead for them with their common Father; let her raise them up, revive them, dress their wounds and carry them on her shoulders and on her heart to that Father Who from afar is sadly watching those ungrateful and unhappy children. Poor Father! How He mourns over the absence of those children who forget Him! How He longs for their return! He thinks only of forgiving them. He dreams only of seeing them again, of embracing them, pressing them to His Heart, making them forget the sufferings which they brought upon themselves by going astray.

Oh, Religious of Our Lady of Charity, what will we not do to console our Father, our Lord, our Spouse! Have we a heart? Do we merit our lovely name, if when we hear Him sigh and groan, we do not endeavour to wipe away His tears and gladden His heart.

Let us not flatter ourselves that we are consoling Him with mere caresses and idly reposing in His House. No, No, He wants His children, and our presence, our very caresses only re-open His wounds and re-awaken His longing for the return of poor miserable sinners, His prodigal children.

Let us to work, then. Let us run, let us fly to seek for our wandering and absent brothers. They are so many and so wretched. Let us not only think of those around us; let our zeal, our ardour, embrace far countries which we may penetrate by our desires, our prayers. Let us waste unsparingly and restore to our Adorable Father all the children whom He mourns. Amen.

II. MEDITATION.

The Good Shepherd.

First Point.—"Ego sum pastor bonus qui pasco oves meas": "I am the Good Shepherd who feed my sheep." John x., 2.

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus," says the Apostle. Daughter of Our Lady of Charity, charged with watching over the sheep who are in danger of being lost, or who having been lost, are found and are returning to the fold, have in your heart and sentiments of Jesus, the Good Shepherd. As far as your sex allows, you are yourself a shepherd by your vocation, you may easily become a hireling if you do not endeavour to be and to remain a good shepherd. Yes, I understand, I would be a hireling if I laboured with a view of gain rather than

through love and devotedness to souls, if I thought of my own interests, even spiritual, of the eternal glory that would revert to me, of enriching myself in a word, rather than saving the sheep entrusted to me. The hireling "whose own the sheep are not," acts in this way. But since all souls belong to God and to Jesus, the only true Shepherd, because His Father has given them to Him for His inheritance, how can they belong to me? Precisely because they belong to Jesus Christ who should live and reign in me and with whom I should be one in the union of heart and mind. By being dead to self and lost in Jesus (we should be as it were, so many Jesus on earth) I am one with Him and with His Father; another Jesus or rather Jesus' very self. I possess all things with Him, His sheep are mine and I am, by rights, their true shepherd. If I were to cease to be united with Jesus, if I should cease to be Jesus, I would have no lawful right to be so, I would become a hireling because the sheep would no longer be mine. They would soon feel it.

When my efforts have been fruitless, might it not be because I was acting by myself, apart from Jesus, and was not guided by a supernatural principle? In a word, because then I was self and not Jesus. How could those souls whose Shepherd is Jesus have followed me?

But if these sheep belong to me, they should be dear to me. I should surround them with a tender and maternal solicitude. Far from fleeing like the hireling, at the approach of the hellish wolf, at the approach of difficulties, sufferings, contradictions, and trials of every kind, I will face them, brave them, ready to take the brunt of them, to endure all the blows so as to spare my dearly loved sheep.

"Pasco oves meas: I feed my sheep." What good would it do to preserve them from the wolf if they are dying of hunger within the fold or have not sufficient nourishment? "I am the Good Shepherd; I feed my sheep," says the Divine Shepherd. Yes, my first duty as a shepherd is to lead my flock to wholesome pastures.

I must go first myself to seek out this good and precious food; I must know the shortest and safest way to reach it, and above all, I must be assured of the wholesomeness of the nourishment. The fertile plains of Holy Scripture, the vast fields of the Fathers of the Church should be familiar to me. I should have explored them in all directions, and I can still do so daily with additional profit. "Holy Scripture," says St. Jerome, "is a prairie enamelled with heavenly flowers; they are the life and the real delights of the Holy Book." When we read the Scriptures, it is not a sage, a genius, however great, with whom we hold intercourse, but the Spirit of God, we gather the very thoughts of the Eternal Wisdom, the very highest truths, the purest and surest lights that souls need on earth are to be found in those sacred pages.

So it is preferably to them that I should lead my flock, choosing from among the various herbs, those best suited to the weak temperaments and simple tastes of each of my sheep. I should guide them thither myself; they cannot go alone. I must go before them, guide them, clear the way, measuring my pace to theirs so as to spare them any fatigue which might discourage them.

Have I fulfilled all my duties as a good shepherd? Far from it, O my God. Frequently I have acted from very human motives; leaning upon reason rather than upon faith; going to

souls by custom, caprice, nature; counting upon my talents, my experience, my virtue, and forgetting that it is through Jesus, for Jesus and in Jesus that I should act and speak. Too frequently I have been as cowardly and egotistic as the hireling; fleeing before the slightest difficulty, and caring little about guiding my flock to wholesome and abundant pastures. Might not the weakness, illness, even death of some of those poor sheep be the result of the insufficiency of their spiritual food?

Here is food for thought tnd examen for a daughter of Our Lady of Charity.

Second Point.—"Cognosco oves meas et cognoscunt me meae": "I know mine and mine know me." Unless I can repeat these words with my divine Spouse, I am neither a good nor a true shepherd.

"I know my sheep," not merely in a general way, but each one individually; not with a vague superficial knowledge, but with a sure, intimate and profound knowledge. I call each of them "by name," by the name that suits it and signifies what it is.

I know their strong points and their weak ones; I know what injures them and what profits them, the food, the treatment that is particularly suited to each.

But in order to know them, we must study them, follow them closely and observe them minutely. This knowledge can only be the result of constant, serious study.

The knowledge of souls! How rare and difficult it is? What study it requires! A soul is something so hidden, so vast, so profound.

But the difficulty of the study should not daunt me. And if I cannot fathom this science

to its depths, which is the most beautiful after that of God, I should at least, with the aid of grace and, enlightened by the Father of Light, strive to attain that knowledge which my vocation demands. It is my duty to do so especially if I am employed in the direction of the Classes. To what faults would not the want of this knowledge expose me?

The first step, before attempting to study a soul, is to humble yourself profoundly before God the Father and beseech Him through the intercession of Mary and the guardian angel of the soul, to reveal it to us in so far as it is necessary for the fulfilment of our mission.

To guide a soul, we must know its way; it would be a gross mistake, nay, a capital fault, to want to make them all follow the same way; each one, however little, however humble she may be, has her own special route. In order to discover that way, we must examine the one the soul has hitherto traversed and above all the workings of grace in a soul so as to put it and keep it in its right way. But alas! how many poor souls there are, who in spite of the efforts and loving pursuits of God, have never entered upon their way or have already strayed from it! In such a case we require great tact, rare prudence and light borrowed from the Master of Light to make these wanderers understand the imperious necessity of travelling the road which leads to the only reasonable and desirable end.

The affair is all the more difficult as their attraction frequently inclines them to exterior pleasures. Still, they have a higher attraction, veiled by that deceitful attraction and perhaps hidden away in the very depths of their soul, one which it is important to discover and by which we must gently allure them to virtue.

We must know the soul itself, its majesty, its depth, its elevation, its capacity and, above all, its strength.

To wish to make a weak soul walk at the same pace as a strong soul would be as imprudent as to make a sick person walk at the same pace as a strong and healthy person.

Then, too, the same soul cannot always travel at the same pace; there are moments of weariness, weakness and even illness which must be taken into consideration.

Lastly, the good shepherd must know both the good and bad qualities, the tastes and aversions, the character, temperament, and habits of each of his sheep; and in accordance with that knowledge he must treat and direct them.

"Et cognoscunt me meae": "And mine know me." If they do not know me, how will they give me a hearing? How will they follow me? They know me. They know that I am their shepherd and that they are my sheep. My devotedness and my love are alike known to them. They know that they can count upon my love and rest under my crook in all security. "Oves meae vocem meam audiunt": "My sheep hear my voice": they distinguish it among a hundred others, they instinctively make their way towards it.

Is it really true that I know my sheep and that my sheep know me? If I am entrusted with the care of part of the flock, is my principal study that of souls? If I do not know them, is it not my own fault? In the first place, I do not pray fervently enough to the Father of Light to enlighten me; I depend too much upon myself and do not humble myself sufficiently before God. Because I am, perhaps, dealing only with simple and common souls, I think I know them well

enough and too often forget that "to direct and govern a soul in the spiritual ways of grace is a more excellent thing than to be temporal ruler of the world itself!"

O Jesus, Good Shepherd, give Thy Spouse Thine Own Heart's sentiments and knowledge with regard to souls whom Thou hast redeemed at the cost of so much labour!

Third Point.—"Et animam pono pro ovibus meis": "And I lay down my life for my sheep." John x., 15.

To be a good shepherd. it is not enough to know your sheep, to lead them to pasture and watch over them; the good shepherd gives his life, he dies for his sheep.

He gives His life, His whole life; not a day, not an hour, not a moment that was not given to His loved sheep. He lived for them. He devoted and spent His whole life in their service. And then He died for them, in their stead, to save their life.

Thus did the Model Shepherd. Scarcely had He taken a mortal body in the womb of His Virgin Mother than He offered Himself to His Father for the salvation of His flock: "Holocaustum et pro peccato non postulasti; tunc dixi; Ecce venio": "Burnt offering and sin-offering, Thou didst not require; then said I, behold I come." And thenceforth there was not a single moment of His thirty-three years that was not given to His sheep. For them He was born, He wept, He prayed, He journeyed, He preached, He breathed, in a word, He lived. Oh how truly He could say, "I give my life for my sheep." And after giving it drop by drop, He gives it again on the Cross. Here is the consummation, the crowning of that

act of donation, of immolation of which our life and our death should be a faithful copy.

On the ever-blessed day of our Religious Profession (our incarnation) we, like our divine Spouse, offered our lives to God for the salvation of souls. Consequently, that life is no longer ours and we should pour it out drop by drop, without any reserve for the sheep to whom it belongs. Our least actions, our prayers, our sufferings, everything that goes to make up our life, should be consecrated to them. We should spend our lives in their service, saying with Jesus: "I lay down my life for my sheep." But let these words be true, profoundly true. Then shall we be able to repeat them in our last moments, when death will come to help us to make or rather to consummate the sacrifice of our life.

Now it is neither a natural death nor a material cross that we must endure. Death to self, i.e., death to our own will and judgment, our tastes and our particular attractions, to all that is most ourselves in a word, is none the less real death, a death all the more repugnant to nature, as it is a longer one.

Neither is the cross wanting. We meet it under a variety of forms, every moment we may stretch ourselves upon it with Jesus, and there only can we justly repeat with Him: "Animam meam pono pro ovibus meis": "I lay down my life for my sheep."

O my God, here again what a field for examen! Am I really giving my life for souls? Do I not frequently dispose of it as if it belonged to me still? As if I had not said with my Divine Spouse on the day of my solemn Consecration: "Behold, I come; I lay down my life for souls, Thy sheep who have become mine!" And I am hoarding that

life which is no longer my own? Am I ready to die for souls? To die to self, i.e., to deprive myself, to mortify myself for them? Would I venture to say that I lay down my life when I sometimes refuse to lay down trifles?

Forgive, O my Beloved Jesus, forgive me. In the light of retreat I see how I have failed to fulfil my promises. I have been an unworthy, a cowardly shepherd, a hireling in a word! I feared for my own life and exposed that of the souls I was guarding. Avenge Thyself, Adorable Master, I consent to it. Avenge Thyself upon me for the offences souls have committed through my fault. Let me suffer in this world the torments my sins deserve, but do not punish me by allowing souls to suffer or be lost by them. Rather let me suffer in their stead and give me a greater and more generous devotedness that I may repair the faults of which I have been guilty and let me immolate myself with Thee for the salvation of souls! Amen.

III. MEDITATION.

The Passion.

"Dilexit me et tradidit semitipsum pro me": "He loved me and delivered Himself up for me!" Galat. ii., 20.

First Point.—What is passion? (taken in its natural and general sense). By the word passion we mean an interior impulse which draws us violently towards an object and consequently draws us just as violently away from the opposite object.

Passion, another will say (taking the word in its evil sense) passion! Ah, it is something very

dangerous, terrible! Those who follow its dictates are very unhappy. Passion, why it is the corrupter of the human race, Satan's accomplice, the purveyor of prisons and what is worse, the terrible and all too indefatigable purveyor of Hell. It was its victims that St. Theresa saw falling into Hell like flakes of snow. It blinds, it maddens, it ruins health and family, lastly, it dishonours and even kills those who give themselves up to it. It tramples the proprieties underfoot, contemns the most sacred obligations, the noblest glories, the purest joys, and breaks the holiest barriers to attain its coveted object. And where does it lead its ill-fated victims? To the deepest misery, the most disgusting, if not pitiable, the most crushing shame, the most deplorable excesses, the most atrocious crimes, and finally to despair.

Let us take a questioning glance (with the eye of the understanding) at all the unhappy people in the world, at all those who suffer, whatever their position; at the root of every suffering, little or great, real or imaginary, we will find a passion, whether admittedly so or not, but still a passion. Perhaps we will be tempted to say: but is passion really such a great, such a vast evil, since all the sin and misery under the sun is its unhappy fruit. Would it not have been better if God had created us without passions? No, No, the passions are one of God's gifts; therefore, they are good, for everything coming from the hand of a God, so good, is necessarily, essentially good.

All those evils that we deplore, as the poisoned fruits of the passions, are only the work of their director who did not, or would not know how to direct them. What would you think of a rider who instead of guiding his steed, allowed himself

to be guided by it and would then hold it responsible for taking the wrong road and for the wounds he had received? And truly, our passions are swift-flying, impetuous, fiery steeds and consequently much more apt to lead us over a steep and rocky road. The important point is to train them to walk in the straight road of perfection, without deviating either to the right or to the left, for there are deep abysses on either side. But to wish to clamber up that mountain of which the approach is so difficult and the inclines so rapid would be a culpable temerity and a real impossibility.

If, in order to excite us to distrust, our angel shows us on the one hand, at the foot of the holy mount, the open pit where Satan tortures the ill-starred victims of passion, on the other, to excite our confidence, he shows us on the summit of that same mount, the Martyred God nailed to His Cross surrounded by a vast crowd of glorious martyrs and, speaking of those different victims, says: "See what passion does; it makes martyrs for Heaven or for Hell, for Christ or for the demon."

Yes, it is the cause of every misery when it is wrongly directed; yes, but it is likewise the glorious cause of the most eminent virtue, of the most heroic devotedness and the most divine honours. If the prisons contain its impure and guilty victims, are not we, in this cherished prison, the joyous and all too happy victims of the noblest and purest of passions: Love of God?

Passion leads some to the scaffold, it is true, but every day, too, it leads to Calvary and the Altar, souls eager to resemble the most passionate of men: the Crucified, the amorous Jesus. Passion makes some capable of every crime and in-

famy and others of every sacrifice and heroism. Passion is a force, blessed or cursed by God, according to its direction; it will, at any cost, attain its coveted object. Well directed, it makes Saints; wrongly directed, it makes reprobates. Some owe their happiness to it, others their unhappiness; it is a means of grace and sanctification which becomes a danger only in cowardly hands, in the service of a weak will.

Oh, passion is something great, noble, divine even, since it was to satisfy the most sublime and most ardent of passions that an eternal God became man and gave Himself up to death in time!

Second Point.—"Dilexit me et tradidit semetipsum pro me": "He loved me and delivered Himself up for me!"

Yes, Religious souls, Spouses of Jesus Christ, let us understand and always remember! God loved us passionately. And to what excesses, dolorous for Him and blessed for us, did not that love, the most passionate that ever was, lead Him?

Yes, it was the passion of the Heart of Jesus for us that drew Him from the bosom of His Father, where He experienced infinite joys, to shut Himself up in the womb of His Virgin Mother and to relish the dampness of the crib, the cold, the poverty, the loneliness of the stable. It was that passion that led Him to spend thirty years in obscure and difficult toil at the humble trade of a carpenter to traverse with incredible fatigue the torrid plains of Judea to seek out souls, the object of His love! In fine, it was the ardour, the violence of His holy passion which launched Him into the betrayals, the abandonment, the insults, blows, the scourges and thorns! It was His love for us rather than the nails that fastened

Him to the Cross, which has become the monument and the authentic proof of His vehement passion for our souls! Contempt, injury, torments, excesses, folly, nothing daunts Him, nothing is an effort to Him. He will, at any cost, satisfy the burning passion of His Heart.

And it was from that very Passion, from the ardour and violence of that passion that He drew courage and strength to surmount all the difficulties, to endure all the suffering possible to an Omnipotent God!

What is it that still holds Him captive in our midst? His love, His passion for our souls.

Oh. how beautiful it is; how pure and holy is the passion of our Divine Spouse. It is precisely from its purity and sanctity that it draws strength; that strength which would surprise us in a man and which should surprise us still more in a God.

Oh, how tenderly we are cherished, how passionately we are loved by our adorable spouse; to captivate us, He did not recoil before what the world flies, contempt and accusation of madness. The word "passion" has become synonymous for the "history of the sufferings of Jesus." Oh, for the interior soul, the profound study of sufferings of the Man-God is a perfect revelation of the dearest passion of His Adorable Heart.

The story of Our Lord's Passion includes only that of the sufferings which preceded and accompanied His death, but to be complete, it should include His whole life and even Eternity, for He loved us passionately from all eternity. He Himself declares: "In charitate perpetua dilexi te": "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." And from all Eternity, God was thinking of means to prove that passionate love! The most impossible

seemed to Him to be the best. Through future ages, He contemplated the Cross as the sensible expression of His Eternal passion.

O Jesus, impassioned with love for us, impassion us with love of Thee!

Third Point.—Impassioned! we may be so; nay, more, we should be so with love for our Adorable Spouse! Let us love Him immeasurably; now, here, excess is still a measure, the last it is true, but still it is one. Let us love LOVE with all the ardour and all the violence of passion. And in order to satisfy that divine and heavenly passion, let us know how to be strong in labour and in suffering. Certainly, if our passion is free from every human taint, we will draw strength, nay, triumphant energy, therefrom.

In fact, how comes it that we are sometimes so weak, so languid in the service of our Divine Spouse? How comes it that we have so little ardour to surmount the obstacles we meet with in the path of perfection and that finally we have the sorry courage to renounce the crown that always rewards our least effort? Our passion is not pure. It is not wholly unalloyed; alongside of the heavenly passion of pleasing God, we nourish, we even caress some dear little passions!

We would like to reconcile them, as if darkness were analogous with light. It is a trifle, perhaps, if anything can be called trifling, when it is an obstacle to so great a good as is union with God. It is a desire—which is almost not one: a petty attachment—but it is based on such lovely motives: an inclination,—imperceptible: a habit—insignificant in our opinion; an imperfection—which injures no one, or from which we are the chief or the only one to suffer: a nothing, in a word. But that trifle, that nothing, suffices to

alter the purity of our passion, to take away its vigour and force? That nothing impedes our passion in tending only to God; it enervates our strength by scattering it over several objects.

Let our passion be single, and certainly our strength will be greater, our ardour keener and our happiness more perfect. Whence come, in fact, the petty trials and most of the difficulties of souls consecrated to God? The fact is that those souls are not wholly and only God's. Love of our great God is not the only passion of their hearts. Whilst seeking God, they still seek something besides. In a word, the purity of their passion is tainted by some human affection, some self-seeking. Besides the noble and sublime passion of love for God, there is still another passion which offends God, and which is an obstacle to His divine bounty.

Let us enter into ourselves during these days of retreat and let us see how we stand in regard to the right direction of our passions and particularly to the purity of our passions. Have we no other passion than love for God? Is our divine Spouse its sole object? Is our dominant passion to please Him? Do we not frequently seek to please creatures and ourselves?

Do we seriously endeavour to purify our passions, to free them from every earthly alloy? from all self-seeking and self-satisfaction? Do we make courageous effort to keep our passions in the direction marked out by the Rule and by the evangelical counsels? Have we not been sadly or subtly mistaken hitherto, in directing them towards an end unworthy of our double vocation as Christians and Religious?

Ah! the passion of a soul, separated from the world, consecrated and united to God, to a thrice

Holy God, should be so pure, so heavenly, so divine.

It is under the shadow of the bloody Cross on which our Love was crucified that we must study the passion of Jesus for us aud our passion for Jesus. Oh how favourable is the shadow of the Cross for this study!

Let us seriously apply ourselves to it. In this delightful study, our passion is elevated, purified, strengthened. Our mind is enlightened, our ardour enkindled, our heart inflamed whilst contemplating the pierced Heart of our Spouse!

If our passion for Jesus does not draw us to Calvary, to the Cross, is it a worthy response to His passion for us? "Calvary is the lovers' mount," says St. Francis de Sales.

The Passion! it is the story of the excesses into which God threw Himself for us! Well may our passion one day be the story of the excesses into which our love for God threw us.

Let us fly to the Cross, let us clasp it in our arms and to our heart. Let us close our exterior and interior senses more and more to everything foreign to the great and loving mystery of the divine Passion. Let us happily lose ourselves in the thought of the Cross.

Let us be thoroughly permeated with the spirit of that Mystery. But let us not forget that a perfect understanding of it is given only to souls, truly dead to the world and to self and that "the divine Crucified can and will be understood only by the Crucified."

As Spouses of a crucified God, let us be crucified in order to resemble our Spouse, to realize the mysterious delicacy of His love, the adorable excesses of His passion. In the intelligence of that mystery we will certainly imbibe energy, ar-

dour, fervour and that holy violence, the fruit of a pure and sincere passion, a violence that will open Heaven to us.

There, the celestial passion of love for God will reign in all hearts and inundate them with inebriating sweetness.

NOTE: Love of God was so dominantly the passion of Bl. Fr. Eudes that his whole ambition was to satisfy it by suffering martyrdom. He even made a vow to do so. He has justly been called a martyr of desires. The fourteen pages devoted to that subject (in his work, the Life and Reign, etc.) show us to what degree he was animated by the spirit of the cross, by the love of suffering. Every true child of that martyr of love will delight in meditating on that chapter during her annual retreat.

VII. CONSIDERATION.

The Eucharist.

"Desiderio desideravi hoc pascha manducare vobiscum": "With desire, I have desired to eat this Pasch with you." Luke xii., 15.

I.

What shall I say of Thy Eucharist, O Jesus? In the presence of that Sacrament of incredible love, I fall prostrate! I annihilate myself! Words and voice fail me, I am silent and adore. Crushed beneath the weight of Thy majesty, at the sight of Thy abasement, I tremblingly venture to formulate a request, O Eucharistic God! Since Thy love stoops to me and Thou sayest: "My delight is to be with the children of men," answer my prayer, tell me, O my Jesus, all that Thou art to me and all that Thou wishest me to be to Thee in this Sacrament which St. Bernard calls: "The Marvel of Marvels, the Love of Loves!"

Since the soul was made for God, everything within it calls for that sovereign Good; everything that composes it strongly tends towards that Divine Object; all its powers demand Him and seek Him everywhere, as the centre of rest and happiness!

Then, too, what suffering! What cruel deception! When, having mistaken the way, instead of falling into that abyss of every good, it falls, on the contrary, into an abyss of every evil.

But what other torment for a soul that lives only for God, which enjoys only God, if she cannot approach the object of her love nor appease the hunger which devours her!

Could Jesus submit the souls He loves to that torment, more cruel than death, without bringing them some relief? Could He wait till Eternity to yield to their wishes? To quench a thirst which He Himself excites, a thirst, devouring and infinite in its object. Man's heart was made for God; and even here upon earth God wishes to give Himself to those who call upon Him alone and who cannot live without Him.

But in order to do so, He must reverse every law of nature, and include twelve miracles or rather twelve mysteries in a single Sacrament! No matter! "My delight is to be with the children of men!" The natural order will yield to the Divine order and love will be satisfied!

Yes, Jesus is in the Eucharist, He responds to the needs of man's hearts of which He is the end. He is there to appease the divine hunger of the soul and to have it await, without too much suffering, the great banquet of Heaven! He is there to be the miraculous cure of souls attacked with the incurable and sublime malady of Love of God! It is the Heaven of earth! The country

where hearts sufferings from heavenly home-sickness come to breathe air that agrees with them.

"If I had not instituted the Eucharist, I would have instituted it for you because of your love," said Jesus one day to Blessed Margaret Mary, as He had already said to St. Gertrude. Yes, for the consolation of a single fervent, faithful soul, Jesus would have instituted this Sacrament of unspeakable Love; could He not do so for the totality of such souls! And if Jesus owes Himself to any soul, is it not to one who has chosen Him for her Spouse? Being united to the Man-God by a mysterious and divine marriage, has she not a right to the presence of her Spouse? Could He condemn her to the torment of absence till the day of positive union?

If the Old Law had no Eucharist, God probably had other ways of communicating Himself to men; besides there were no "virgins" then, no "spouses" who might in a manner necessitate the presence of their Spouse. The first one that appeared upon earth drew Him into her womb: "The love of that Queen of all Virgins who have followed in her train," will force Him to fix His abode near them. Was that not justice?

Will those Spouses sadly and tearfully mourn their separation from their only Beloved until death? Because they cast aside every mortal support, will they be abandoned to their own weakness? Because they renounce the most lawful affections, inasmuch as they are earthly, will they enjoy none? Because they contemned the pleasure of earth, will others not be given them? Because they sacrificed father, mother, brothers, sisters, friends, protection, fortune, will they be deprived of all those possessions?

Oh, no! Assuredly not! God cannot allow Himself to be outdone in generosity! The Eucharist will be the hundred-fold promised to those who leave all for love of Him! Eucharistic Jesus. He is the Father, Mother, Friend, Treasure, Spouse of the Soul, who, here below, has found nothing to correspond, as she wished, to those titles! And if it is true that no one is more fatherly than God, "nemo tam pater"; it is no less true that no one is more a Spouse than He! And what a Spouse! Oh, yes, Jesus in the Eucharist is all in all to a soul who leaves all for Him!

II.

What Jesus expects from me in this Sacrament of love and union is that I make myself worthy to bear all the titles corresponding to those He assumes towards me. Father, He wishes to find in me a confiding and docile child, whose whole happiness is to rest in His arms and lavish proofs of a most filial love upon Him!

An incomparable Brother, He wants me to be His tender and affectionate sister. A divine Friend, He wants me to be a constant, attentive and intimate friend to whom He can confide everything and whom He will find ever ready to receive His confidences. A support, He wishes me to lean upon Him alone! Treasure, He does not allow me to esteem nor seek any riches but His! Spouse, oh! He asks a companion worthy of Him. Another Self who may share His sorrows as His joys, a true Spouse, in a word, a chaste and faithful Spouse, who loves only Him and enjoys no love but His, a loving and devoted Spouse, ready to suffer and to die for Him and whose delicate love, gentle, yet strong, consoles Him in all His trials!

Hence springs, for the pious and grateful soul the obligation of as perfect a resemblance as possible to Jesus in the Eucharist, Who, by so many titles, imposes Himself as the Ideal of the Perfect Religious. How could she please her Divine Spouse and make her service pleasing to Him without that resemblance, which, henceforth, becomes her chief duty and sums up all the others.

Like the victim in the tabernacle: "Making herself little by humility and annihilation; white and pure by abstaining from every sin, however slight; poor by the despoiliation of all things, dumb by silence and recollection; round by simplicity and candour; insensible and cold, although burning with charity, by a most unalterable patience and endurance, tractable by her facility in yielding to the least inspiration of grace or obedience; elevated by contempt for everything she looks upon; accessible to all, giving herself to all to sanctify, strengthen and cheer; divisible and allowing herself to be broken so as to give herself to a greater number; condescending so as to come down to the level of souls, likening herself to them in a manner, the better to raise them up afterwards; such is the way to console and rejoice Jesus in the Eucharist by giving Him victim for Victim, sacrament for Sacrament!

O Jesus, My Divine Sacrament, how far I am from being a victim, a sacrament! How little and how poorly I have laboured to imitate Thee in Thy Sacramental life! Forgive me, O my Divine Spouse, forgive! Thou seest the sincerity of my repentance, my contrition and my firm resolution to console Thee henceforth in the Sacrament of Thy love by reproducing Thy life of Immolation. Bless this resolution and grant that I may be faithful to it until death!

III.

Rusbroch the Admirable give us a marvelous picture of the reciprocal action of Jesus and the soul in this Sacrament of love and union, 'The first token of love,' he says, "is that Jesus has given us His flesh to eat and His Blood to drink'; that is an unheard of thing which should call forth our admiration and wonder! The characteristic of love is ever to give and ever to receive.

"Now Jesus' love is covetous and generous. He gives all He has, all He is; He takes all we have, all we are.

"He demands more than we are capable of giving, of ourselves. He hungers to devour us absolutely. He enters into the very marrow of our bones and the more lovingly we permit Him, the more amply He does so. But He devours us without being satiated. His hunger is immense, insatiable. He is well aware of our poverty, but He takes no account of it and forgives us nothing. He devours us, first of all, burning, in His love, vices, faults and sins.

"Then, when He sees us pure, He comes like a vulture about to devour everything. He wishes to consume our life, to change it into His; ours full of vices; His full of grace and glory, all ready for us, if we only renounce self.

"Now if our eyes were pure enough to see this covetous craving of Christ, Who is hungering for our salvation, all our efforts would not prevent us from flying into His open mouth.

"I seem to speak absurdities, but all those who love will understand me.

"Now Jesus' love is of a noble nature. Where He has devoured, there He intends to nourish.

When He has eaten us, it is He Who gives Himself; at the same time He gives the appetite to enjoy Him; He presents us with an eternal hunger and thirst.

"He gives His Body and Blood to satisfy that hunger and thirst. When we receive them with interior devotion, His blood full of zeal and glory flows from God into our veins—and takes fire in the depths of our soul—and a spiritual savour penetrates both soul and body, taste and desire; and the resemblance of His virtues comes to us and He lives in us and we live in Him. And He gives us His soul with its plentitude of grace whereby man persists in charity and in praising God. But over and above, He promises and reveals to us the eternal enjoyment of His Divinity!

"There are men who experience God! Do you wonder that the joy crushes them? When the Queen of Saba saw Solomon's wealth, his splendour and his glory, she almost lost her mind, says Holy Scripture, and went into a rapture. And what was the poor, petty glory of Solomon compared with the glory Who is Christ Jesus?

"We can, to a certain degree, absorb everything concerning His humanity without losing our minds. But when we feel His Divinity, admiration carries us far beyond ourselves to supereessential love and lo! strength fails us before the altar of the Lord, because of the admiration and intolerance of love.

"Love draws its object into itself; we draw Jesus into ourselves. Jesus draws us into Himself and there He devours us. Then we grow, and carried far beyond self, above reason into the interior of love, there we devour spiritually and by love—aspiring to the Divinity, we go,

before our Spouse, before His spirit, which is His love, and that immense love burns us, consumes us with our spirit, draws us into unity where beatitude awaits us! Always to eat, always to be eaten; always to ascend; always to descend, that is our Eternity. Jesus Christ had this in mind when He said to His disciples: "Desiderio desideravi hoc pascha manducare vobiscum": "With desire have I desired to eat this Pasch with you."

This language can be understood and appreciated only by interior souls, dead to nature and to reason and accustomed to judge of everything in a supernatural and divine sense.

O my Eucharistic Jesus, I beseech Thee, detach me from my sense, my reason and from all that is myself and let me understand this adorable Mystery of the admirable union Thou wishest to contract with my soul!

PREPARATION FOR COMMUNION.

What shall we say of the dispositions with which the Virgin, the daughter of the Mother of Fair Love, should be united to God her Spouse Whom an ineffable charity holds captive on our altars?

Charity, love, sums them all up and gives them all the perfection possible! Let her abandon herself unreservedly to love, but to the most ardent, the most vehement love; inebriated with that divine fire, a true daughter of Our Lady of Charity plunges in the Infinite Ocean to seek refreshment, relief, as well as food for the amourous flames which devour her!

Act of Faith.—Love presupposes perfect faith. She not only believes —the fervent Religious of Our Lady of Charity, she knows—she feels that

her God, her Spouse, is in that Host! She has experienced it so often. Were she to see Him with her own eyes, clasp Him in her arms, she would not be more convinced of His presence, a Presence to her so sensible, so real, so penetrating, that it transports her into the world of faith and in a manner makes Him, the Invisible, visible, causing her to say with the Apostle: "Invisibilia ipsius, a creatura mundi, per ea quae facta sunt, intellecta conspiciuntur; sempiterna quoque ejus virtus ea divinitas": "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; His eternal power also and Divinity."

Act of Hope.—Love supposes perfect hope as well as faith. The daughter of the Mother of holy hope not only hopes—she already possesses in a manner!

The God Who gives Himself to her is the pledge and the plentitude of all the blessings that He promises her. She knows that these blessings await her rather than hopes for them. Her hope! it is almost the sweet confidence, the filial abandonment of a child who expects everything from a father by whom he knows himself tenderly loved.

Could God, Who testifies such love in this sweet and divine Sacrament deceive her hope? She does not dream of such a thing. She counts upon His Heart and reposes there in a loving peace, she falls asleep there murmuring "Scio cue credidi": "I know Whom I have believed!"

Act of Love.—She feels it too sensibly! She is too full of it to express it and to make percentible acts!

When it reaches a certain point, love has no language save an admiring silence! She can say

nothing outwardly. She is wholly within where she feels that she loves passionately and that she is ineffably loved by Love! She is lost within herself, where she suffers and languishes, delightfully wounded as she is by the arrows which the Divine Huntsman incessantly aims at her. And as He alone can heal the wounds He makes, she sighs towards Him and begs Him to give her some remedy for that happy malady by wounding her again, by giving her fresh wounds, by enlarging the old. She groans, she pants after Him with all her powers, "As the hart pants after the water-springs." "For Thee my flesh and my heart hath fainted away."

Purity.—Gold is considered pure when it has been seven times tries in the fire. So it is by plunging into this furnace of divine love that the soul is purified more and more and reaches that state where, in a world where everything is sullied, she may be considered pure. Like a chosen dove, she takes up her abode near the holy waters of which the divine Sacraments are the reservoirs; she plunges into them as soon as she perceives the slightest stain upon her, as soon as she feels the pangs of divine thirst!

She begs her Beloved to add to those pure, life-giving waters the precious milk in which the most chaste doves, His best loved spouses, are washed, in order to preserve their dazzling whiteness until death, and contemplating the white host, she repeats over and over again to her Spouse: "Amplius lava me": "Wash we yet more."

Humility.—This virtue is the offspring of light and the pure soul sees nothing but light; and then, too, this soul sees too plainly what God is to imagine, at least, to believe for an instant, that she is worth anything or that she is anything.

The weight of the Divine majesty crushes her. She annihilates herself at His feet without effort. She feels so little beside His Majesty—so weak, so impotent, beside His strength, His Omnipotence; so evil beside His infinite goodness; so guilty, so sullied in the presence of His essential purity, His incomprehensible sanctity; in fine, so limited, so imperfect before the infinity of all His infinite perfections! So, she would like to prostrate in the dust and repeat "Domine non sum dignus": "Lord, I am not worthy."

Desire.—I am not worthy, but how can I live without this Sovereign and only God? Ah! the desires of the soul who has tasted God may well be called torments — ineffable torments, it is true, but none the less real torments. They are continual, violent, impulsive, which, in some wise, snatch the soul from herself to transport her into her Divine Object. "Veni dilecti mi!": "Come, my Beloved," she exclaims rapturously. "Totus desireabilis! Electus ex millibus! Veni, Veni, dilecte mi!": "He is all lovely! Chosen out of thousands! Come! Come! O my Beloved!"

Communion.

My Beloved has heard me. "Ecce iste venit saliens in montibus transiliens colles": "Behold He cometh, leaping upon the mountains, skipping over the hills." From what a height He had to descend to come down to my nothingness? And He deigned to do so. Lo He has come!

Must we speak of the very moment of Communion which may be called the Kiss of our Spouse? No! That is the King's secret; it should be religiously kept! "Sacramentum regis abscondere bonum est": "For it is good to hide the secret of a King."

Thanksgiving.

Returning to herself, inebriated with love, the soul can only exclaim: "Introduxit me Rex in cellam vinariam": "The King brought me into the cellar of wine." I come forth from it a prey to a holy inebriation which makes me insensible to everything. I esteem the nothings of this world as they deserve, for "Ordinavit in me charitatem": "He set in order charity in me." I love each object as order demands.

It is, in effect, the new wine of divine love, says St. Bernard, which causes a holy inebriation, a wise madness, in the soul. This inebriation reaches such a point that the soul, growing faint, calls for help. "Fulcite me floribus, stipate me malis, quia amore langueo!": "Stay me up with flowers; compass me about with apples; because I languish with love." (Cant. ii., 5.).

For thanksgiving, as for preparation, the love of charity sums up all the sentiments and dispositions of the Religious of Our Lady of Charity.

Faith, hope should be still more lively in the presence of their Divine Object. Gratitude should burst forth into transports, but should above all, find vent in acts, for it is by the change of life and progress in virtue, rather than by the sensible consolations of thanksgiving that we judge of the efficacy of Communion in a soul and the sincerity of the sentiments of love, desire, humility, etc., which she expresses.

"We do not know of what blessings we deprive ourselves by neglecting the time of thanksgiving," St. Theresa used to say to her daughters.

When God is in our heart we can, in a way, do what we like, obtain all that we desire from Him, on condition, however, that He will do all that He wills and desires with us.

EIGHTH DAY

I. MEDITATION—THE RESURRECTION.

"Quomodo Christus surrexit a mortuis ita et nos in novitate vitae ambulemus": "As Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in the newness of life." Rom. vi., 4.

First Point.—Jesus did not go down into the tomb to remain there; if He submitted to death, it was the better to triumph over death, to subject it to His sway.

I have not entered into solicitude, into the tomb of retreat, to fix my abode there; but only to assure my triumph over myself and over my passions, to make that triumph more real and more glorious. I should come forth from this retreat renewed, revived.

In His resurrection, as in His death, and in His life, Jesus is my model. Now, what strikes me first of all in the Resurrection of our Saviour, is the fact that He raised Himself from the dead.

Of Him, the prophet had said: "He will be free among the dead," i.e., that He would die how and when He pleased, that He could break the bonds of death when He willed and at the hour marked by Him, as mighty to raise Himself as He had been to raise others. This He accomplished the third day after His death. By that same divine power which He had but lately displayed to the astonished Jews, in the early morn-

ing, the Man-God opened the Sepulchre where His Body had been laid, He arose and appeared in the midst of the soldiers who were guarding the sepulchre. The latter were terror-stricken, fell to the ground and did not dare to lift their eyes to Him.

"O death, where is thy victory, O death, where is thy sting? I will be thy death," and after striking Me, because I permitted it, thou must now yield in spite of thyself to My sovereign power.

To aspire to raise myself according to the spirit and according to God, would be an intolerable presumption. Alas! it is only too true. I kill myself, but to raise myself from the dead is not in my power. Weakness, impotence, even, without the grace of God, I could not overcome the least evil habit nor leave off the slightest imperfection.

But supposing that divine grace, as an absolute necessary principle, that grace on which I can always count because God pours it into my soul with immense liberality, more immense still during these days of retreat, it is certain that I should act and take on a new life. In this sense, my resurrection to a holier life depends upon myself.

The resurrection of our Adorable Saviour was a victory for Him; would I wish mine to cost me nothing? It, too, would be a victory and hence, the fruit of war, of combat.

The body of Jesus was bound in the tomb; and I, too, have bonds to break; bad habits, natural inclinations, immortified passions, etc.

A large and heavy stone weighed upon Jesus' body; it is, alas, only too perfect a symbol of my cowardice, my tepidity and my habits of routine.

All these weigh upon me and seem to say like every tombstone: "It is all over! It will stay there!" No, no! I will remove that stone and arise.

A hostile guard was watching around the Divine Body for fear it would be taken away; besides the invisible enemies of my salvation and perfection who are watching but too closely to retain me in my tepidity, how many other enemies have I to dread? Human consideration, lax example, cutting raillery, natural affection, etc., etc., in short, everything that has hitherto been an obstacle to my well-doing and that I have not had the courage to overcome.

In spite of the many obstacles placed around the sepulchre by the malice of men, the Son of the Almighty freed Himself from the shackles of death, fulfilling the promise given to His Apostles, that He would rise again and appear to them. How often, alas! have I promised, not men, but God Himself, that I would rise to a new life and appear to Him such as He has a right to expect me to be? Now is the time to keep my word. To-morrow, nay to-day, I must put in practice all that I have resolved and promised.

Am I fully resolved to do so? Results will tell. Ah! My Lord and my God, will not my courage fail me as soon as there is question of proving it? Thou wilt not fail me, O my dear Jesus, I am sure, but woe to me if I happen to fail Thee. Oh! pray, preserve me from such a trial!

Second Point.—In His Resurrection, my Divine Spouse took on a glorious life, one absolutely different from that which He had hitherto led. Before it, He had been subject to all the miseries of an obscure life of poverty, to ignominy and sufferings of His cruel passion, He suddenly appear-

ed radiant with light so that the radiance of His glorified Body effaced the brightest light of the Sun. In His former life, His Body was weak and subject to all our infirmities, but in this second life it was clothed with impassibility in which all the weakness and sufferings of our nature have no hold and which renders it forever invulnerable to every blow. Its splendours dazzles the eye, its agility far surpasses the power of our imagination, its subtility penetrates every body; nothing daunts it, it passes through walls as through a mist and penetrates everywhere. So we may truly say that this Mystery of the Resurrection of Our Lord was a Transfiguration much more glorious than that of Thabor.

My resurrection would be neither true nor perfect, unless it transformed me completely. In fact, is there anything in my whole life that does not need to be renewed?

A renewal is necessary, interior or exterior. The interior, in the mind and the will is the most important and the most difficult. It would be comparatively easy for me, after the retreat to be more exact exteriorly and adopt customs apparently more religious. But what would that surface be if there were nothing beneath it; an old, lying placard and nothing more.

I must, then, first regulate and purify my desires and dispositions, rectify my views and intentions, rekindle my zeal and courage. 2. I must rid my mind of the many false ideas and baneful errors that prejudice it; detach my heart from a thousand petty affections, which, however innocent they appear, are neither from God nor according to God. I must purify my mind of that self love which dominates it. In short, I must form myself a new heart and be a new creature.

When the heart is renewed, the whole ex-

terior will soon be so too. To attach myself point by point to the Rule, to perform all my exercises exactly, will be an imperative need. In so far as my past conduct may have disedified or even scandalized my sisters, I now wish to edify them by fidelity and zeal in the fulfilment of my every duty. I will turn my hand and submit to everything.

What am I saying? Ah! My God, will it be so? Alas, these lovely sentiments cost little at the foot of the altar, at the close of a retreat during which Thy grace has enlightened and touched me! So often before I have expressed similar ones, but in practice it is quite a different affair; it is not the work of a simple meditation nor even of the retreat.

At least this retreat will be the foundation and I will leave it with stronger resolutions. It will be a great deal to have them engraven on my heart. I will renew them daily, at all my religious exercises, so that day by day they may help me to renew myself!

Third Point.—"Christ being risen from the dead, dieth now no more." If He could die again, His Resurrection would not be perfect. That life, new and glorious, should at the same time be an immortal life to constitute a complete resurrection.

"Christ risen from the dead, dieth no more." During ages and ages these words of the Apostles have been verified and they will be verified during the eternity of Eternity.

Many of the dead arose at the moment Jesus expired, but after appearing in the streets of Jerusalem, they returned to their tombs. I should not take them for my model, but Christ, my Divine Spouse, who, having once left the tomb,

could never return thither again. Blessed Immortality! It symbolizes one of the most indispensable virtues for me, but also one of the most difficult and rarest—perseverance!

There are few souls who do not profit by a retreat for a few days, or even for a few weeks. They leave it transformed and ready for anything. At first they observe fervently and faithfully the resolutions taken during those holy days, but alas! how frequently that resurrection resembles that of the dead of Jerusalem. Scarcely have they taken a few steps in the holy City, i.e., in piety, than they return to the tomb, to all the old habits of negligence and irregularity! Is this not my own story? After a fervent retreat how often have I not shut myself up in the tomb of my past life; a life full of tepidity and laxity?

How does it happen that I have profited so little by so many retreats in which I was enlightened and touched? How often in the sincerity of my sorrow and repentance have I not said with David: "Now, O Lord, do I begin!" I did begin, in fact, but I had not the courage to finish. Ah! the fact is that a real resurrection first requires a real death. If my resurrection to a fervent life did not prove lasting, is it not because I never sincerely nor completely died to myself?

But this time, I am fully resolved to die wholly to all that is not God. In spite of my infidelity and inconstancy the Heart of my Spouse is still open to me. I can imbibe therefrom all the grace, life and strength I need to overcome the evil which is in me.

My will is weak, it is true, but there is a way to strengthen it, and to this I must henceforth direct my efforts. I fully expect to encounter obstacles; but it is just by overcoming them that I shall

strengthen my will. I should therefore resolve upon every difficulty foreseen and unforeseen and count only upon the grace of God to triumph over them.

My life is passing day by day; perhaps I have a very short time to live. Complete Thy victory, O my Beloved. Employ the same power in withdrawing my soul from its tepidity as Thou didst in raising Thy Body from the tomb. Revive me spiritually! Thou wishest it to cost me something. Oh, it is but just that I should make some efforts towards a resurrection so glorious and so advantageous to myself! I must enter upon a "new" life; but is it not my own fault that it is a "new" life for me? I should long since have grown accustomed to it! I wish to enter upon it without any further delay.

My natural weakness should not discourage me: "I can do all things in Him Who strengtheneth me." Provided I am humble and confident, His arm will sustain me in difficult places. Nothing will be impossible to me, since, according to St. Ignatius, if nothing is impossible with God, "Non est impossibile apud Deum," neither is anything impossible with a soul, who, distrusting self, leans only upon God.

I must be "revived" to revive in my turn souls dead in grace.

II. MEDITATION.

The Spirit of Love.

"Charitas Dei diffusa est in cordibus nostris per Spiritum Sanctum, qui datus est nobis": "The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost Who is given to us." Rom. v., 5.

First Point.—All creatures, says Bourdaloue, announce to us the perfections of God, all being in our regard so many divine benefits for which we were and still are, indebted to His Providence and which He does not cease to shower upon us. But after all, that voice of creatures did not yet touch our hearts enough and nothing, it seems, was capable of moving them and inducing them to love Him.

What is the most excellent means God has adopted to inspire men with His love? He has sent them His Holy Spirit who is personally and essentially Love! The Love of God! The God of Love! This Divine Spirit descended upon the Apostles in the form of tongues of fire, to show that He is Love and that He wishes to burn and inflame those who receive Him!

Now, not once only did He communicate with earth. Every moment He wishes to give Himself to souls who call upon Him and make themselves worthy of His coming. Everytime that we generously renounce self for God, or that we make a fervent act of charity, or any other virtue, the Holy Spirit performs a new mission. The Eternal Father, and the Word send Him into our souls, charged with graces and new favours. This is what is called the Invisible Mission of the Holy Ghost.

But there are special times when this Heavenly Fire acts more forcefully in souls! This is the time of retreat which may be called "the time of the great mission of the Holy Ghost." It was at the end of the retreat which they made in the Cenacle that the Apostles received that Spirit of Love. If I have made this present retreat well, I have good reason to believe that the Holy Ghost has been given to me anew. Do I want a solid

proof of it? I will find it in my love for God; for, to receive the Holy Ghost and to increase in charity is one and the same thing. I must love God in the same proportion as I have received the Holy Ghost.

But, what am I saying? Must we speak of measure where there should be none? God gives His Spirit without measure; therefore I should love God without measure. No, no, my God, no more measure in my love for Thee! since all Thy attractions, all Thy perfections are without limit. Thou art the Infinite; my charity, therefore, should, in some wise, be infinite.

Excess in everything is a fault, and there may be excess in everything except in our love for Thee. What Saint, however filled and inflamed he has been with love for Thee, has not said and thought that he loved Thee too little?

Love never says "enough!" "Nunquam satis": "Yet more, O Lord, to love Thee yet more!" is its eternal refrain. Is it mine? Do I hunger and thirst for this gift of God par excellence, for that spirit of love, that fountain of living water? Does Love fill me, possess me wholly?

O Heart of Mary, all on fire, living cenacle into which the Holy Ghost descended, do thou prepare my heart to receive that adorable Gift and come thyself to receive Him in me!

Second Point.—Yes, it is in the heart that the Spirit of Love will first be poured fourth: "Diffusa est in cordibus nostris." There He fixes His abode and sets up His royal throne, making us feel, ere long, His marvellous operations.

And what does He not inspire in the soul where He has become master? To what high sanctity does He not raise it?

Scarcely had the Holy Ghost descended upon the Apostles than the latter became new men. Their hearts were purified and detached from affection for every created object. Their timidity gave place to a holy boldness; they were forbidden to preach Jesus Christ and they replied, "We must obey God rather than men."

They were scourged and immediately they went their way rejoicing, thanking God for having deemed them worthy to suffer reproach for His Name's sake. This new strength is the second effect of the presence of the Holy Ghost in the Apostles and it springs from the first—purity of heart. In effect, the more a heart is pure and free from every attachment to visible things, the more divine love touches it interiorly, inflames it, and makes it zealous in its combats. What a conflagration there is when a fire meets no obstacle to arrest its course! "You could not imagine what a fire of love was enkindled in my heart," says our holy Father St. Augustine, speaking of his experience after he had broken his bonds. What might the Apostles have said on leaving the Cenacle? They seemed so excited, so beyond themselves that people thought them drunk with wine.

This is what so many saints have experienced. All that is most ardent and penetrating in profane love is not to be compared to the amorous impulses that ravish them. They fall into holy swoons and even love the use of their senses. "If you find my Beloved," they would say with the Spouse in Canticles, "tell Him that I languish with love." Have I not a heart like theirs, capable of loving? How comes it that that heart, made for God alone, is sometimes so cold and insensible towards Him?

We must not say that sensibility is not necessary in love for God; that is true, but it is no less true that if my heart were pure and void of human things, I would have very different ideas of love and very different attractions to Love's very self. I am so vivacious and sensitive, sometimes so little affects me, will I be cold to God alone? Has He not, as He still does daily, given me sufficient grace? Are not His charms potent enough for me? Are not all those sweet names—Creator, Preserver, Saviour, Father, Brother, Friend, and above all, Spouse,—which He gives Himself to come to me, capable of inflaming me with love?

And are not all these ideas sufficiently present to me? What do I see around me that does not repeat the infinite mercies of God. They are incomprehensible. But, O my Divine Jesus, the more inconceivable they are, the more inconceivable becomes my indifference, the more I should reproach myself with it and during the grace of retreat, strive to leave it and leave it forever!

Third Point.—Our love for God should resemble God's love for us. This great God loves us. But to testify His love, it was not enough for Him to have given us being, life and all that preserves and perfects it: He gave us His Son, His Only-Begotten Son. And that Gift, it seems, did not satisfy His liberality: He gave us His own Spirit, His Love! He gave It to us, and giving It, gave Himself with all that He has and all that He is. He gave us His Grace! But which of us can understand what God's grace is? According to the Prince of the Apostles, "He hath given us most great and precious promises; that by these we may be made partakers of the Divine Nature." According to St. Thomas of Aquin, "It is a parti-

cipation in the very nature of God. It is the transformation of man into God, the commencement of glory in us!"

The Spanish catechism adds: "Grace is a divine principle which makes us children of God and of His glory."

But simply copying Mgr. Gaume, we ask, what is this Deifying gift in its intimate nature? Grace is not merely, as it is too often defined, a help given by God with a view to our salvation. Help is the effect of grace and not grace in its essence. Neither is grace a gift, exterior to the soul; it is in the very essence of the soul. It is a divine principle, a new element super-added to our nature, a super-eminent quality which dwells in the very essence of the soul, which acts upon the soul and upon all its powers as the soul itself acts upon the body and its organs. "To be sure," continues St. Thomas, "grace is not the substance of the soul, nor its substantial form; but it is its accidental form." In effect, by grace what is substantially in God becomes accidentally in the soul, rendering it participant in the divine perfections."

Now, what is substantially in God, if not God Himself—the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost, the Adorable Trinity? By grace, therefore, God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, the Adorable Trinity, is accidentally in the Christian.

God is substantially life, sanctity, strength, light, perfection, eternal beatitude. The Christian is therefore accidentally divine life, divine sanctity, divine strength, divine light, divine perfection, divine beatitude. He is all that accidentally, i.e., he can cease to be so whilst God cannot.

The soul of the Christian is, therefore, the abode, the temple, the throne of God. So God

is infinitely more united to the Christian than He is to other creatures, by His essence, His presence, His power to such a degree that if, though impossible, God were not in the soul as He is with other creatures by essence, by presence and by power, He would be really so by grace. As the Body of the word Incarnate becomes present under the species of bread by the words of Consecration; or as His Divinity became present in His humanity at the moment of the Incarnation, so that, if hitherto It had been absent, It then began to be present and to exist in It personally; thus, it is with the union of God with man by grace. This union is so intimate that it is the most perfect to which a pure creature can aspire.

How is this deifying union accomplished to which we owe not only being called, but really being children of God? The answer to this question makes us sound one of the abysses of Infinite Love. By communicating His grace to us, the Holy Ghost, our Sanctifier, might only have made us just and holy, without making us His children. Such a favour would have merited our eternal gratitude. He might have honoured us with that adoption, contenting Himself with giving us grace and creative gifts; for grace, as we have seen, is a participation in the Divine Nature. This second favour would have been greater than the first. The Holy Ghost was not content with it.

He wished to give Himself with His gifts; and by Himself, in person, deify us and adopt us. With this in view, He voluntarily united Himself to His gifts, in such a way that when He pours them into a soul, He Himself is given by them and with them, personally, substantially, so as to contract a union with us, surpassed only by the Hypostatic Union of God and man in the Word In-

carnate. Such is, then, the immense love of the Holy Ghost and the supreme elevation of the Christian; at the moment of our divine generation, not only grace and the other gifts of the Holy Ghost have been bestowed upon us, but the Holy Ghost Himself, increated Gift and Author of all gifts. Mingled and identified with His gifts as it were, this Divine Spirit dwells in us, in person, vivifies us, adopts us and deifies us. Is there anything greater?

Oh Spirit of Love, I surrender myself unreservedly to Thy divine action! May the sweetly profound Mystery of Thy grace wholly absorb me! Let Thy loving flames consume every imperfection within me! I know that Thou art a jealous God and that Thou wishest an unreserved and undivided love! Thou shalt have it, O my God, Who art all Love, Thou shalt have that entire and profound love! I wish to love but Thee in souls and souls in Thee alone! I wish to love Thee in everything.

III. MEDITATION.

The Heart of Jesus and Mary!

"En illa fornax panditur
Afferte sacris ignibus,
Afferte corda, pascitur
Fornax amanda cordibus."

"Lo, it is open, this wondrous furnace; bring, bring hearts to its sacred fires, for this furnace of love feeds only on hearts." (Office of the Heart of Jesus).

First Point.—Daughters of Bl. Father Eudes, our first and principal devotion should be devo-

tion to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Our Father was the first apostle of this devotion; we should be his faithful disciples and devoted children.

Each religious family has its own special devotion. The mission of some is to honour the Mysteries of the Childhood or the life of Jesus and of Mary; of others to revere the sorrows of Jesus and His holy Mother; ours the devotion to the Divine Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, but united and blended into one and the same heart, by perfect conformity of disposition and will.

This idea of not separating the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, an idea peculiar to our Blessed Founder, shews us how deeply that profound mystic had penetrated the ineffable secret of the relations of the Man-God with the most pure Virgin, whom He had chosen for His Mother. It was given to our Father to understand what those most holy and most loving Hearts are to each other! And he concluded that it was not fitting, according to the rules of love, that they should ever be separated!

Art usually represents our Blessed Father, kneeling in an ecstasy at the feet of the Blessed Virgin, bearing the Divine Child in her arms. With one hand Jesus offers him His Sacred Heart, with the other He points to that of His Mother and seems to say: "In My Heart you also have My Mother's Heart!"

Is it not for us to explain this Mystery of Love which our Bl. Founder makes us continually write, in defiance of grammatical rules, "Vive Jesu et Marie," Live Jesus and Mary! The Hearts, or rather the Heart of Jesus and Mary is the object of our characteristic family devotion.

Our Father bequeathed It to us as a heritage with the mission to honour It, manifest It and serve It.

We should honour the Heart of Jesus and of Mary. Now, to honour It is to love It, for love can be honoured only by love. Does not our Bl. Founder put it excellently: "Summa devotio est imitari quod colimus": "The highest devotion is to imitate what we would honour."

By His Divine nature, Jesus is all love, and by grace Mary, too, is all love! In Jesus, in Mary, we see only the Heart; in the Heart we see only love; but the purest, the most ardent, the most generous, the most passionate, the most profound, the most consuming, in a word, the most perfect love. The happy love of giving self and being united to its object: love with all its transports and all its flames!

Our two Feasts and our two principal and preferred devotions, those of the Heart of Jesus and of the Heart of Mary are feasts and devotions of love and nothing but love. Love is the dominant feeling or rather absorbs all the others. What a beautiful and unique devotion! What a vast field it opens up for our meditations and pious studies! What delightful mysteries it contains for a meditative soul!

In our admirable Mother, who is admirable in all things, it is principally the Heart that we admire and study. In the Son and in the Mother, it is still the heart that we regard and honour, it is the love of that heart, "it is the heart of that love!"

"Deus charitas est": "God is charity; God is love!" Now, since Jesus is God, He is love; His Heart is, therefore, the Heart of love and the Love of His Heart; He is the Love of the Heart of Love. For all the children of Bl. Father Eudes, this is what the Heart of Jesus is: God in so far

as love, i.e., the very Love, the Heart of that God of Love and the Love of that Heart of Love!"

What we say absolutely of the Heart of Jesus may be said relatively of the Heart of Mary.

"Beloved Daughters of the amiable Heart of the Mother of Love, abide in the motherly Heart of your dear Mother; it is one with the Divine Heart of her Son Jesus. Let it be the place of your rest, the city of your refuge, your impregnable tower of strength, your garden of delights, your earthly Paradise. Live in the life of that blessed Heart. Let its sentiments be yours. Enter into its dispositions; follow its inclinations, love what it loves, hate what it hates and nothing else; desire only what it desires; rejoice not except for what it rejoices at; have no fear except what it would fear were it still subject to fear; be not sad except at that which would render it sad if it were still capable of sadness. Labour for the accomplishment of its designs, give yourselves up without interruption to the spirit that animates it, that its spirit may possess you and lead you in all things, that its grace may sanctify you, that its charity may inflame you, that its love may set you on fire and above all, that you may be devoured by its zeal for the salvation of souls." (Wishes of our Bl. Founder).

Let us enter into the spirit of this exhortation of our Father and have a tender devotion to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Let us consecrate to Them all the love and affection of our hearts. We have already said that the object of this devotion **is not only the heart** (i.e.) **the love of Jesus and** Mary, but it is also the heart of the Love of Jesus and of Mary that is all that is tenderest and most intimate, most profound and most secret, most subtle and most delicate in love!

Let us not merely give Jesus and Mary the love of our Heart, let us give Them also the heart of our love; all that is purest and truest, tenderest and most solid in our most real sentiments. We must in some wise distil them on the fire of the most ardent charity, to offer the essence, the quintessence all pure to the Heart of our Love. It is thus that He would be honoured by the Daughters of Our Lady of Charity. Docile to the voice of our Father, let us hasten to plunge into this wondrous furnace which opens to receive its happy victims. Let us throw ourselves into those divine flames so that everything that is still human and terrestrial in us, so that everything that puts an obstacle to our union with our Celestial Spouse may be consumed in that sacred fire!

The place of that union, our nuptial bed, is again that furnace of love, for it is in the fires of holy love, that the union is consecrated, cemented and consumed, for union is the fruit and necessary consequence of love.

Second Point—To manifest devotion to the Heart of Jesus and Mary: Our Bl. Founder does not confide the Heart of Jesus and Mary to us merely for our own satisfaction, but he also commissions us to manifest it to the world by every means in our power. We should inspire the souls whom we instruct with this devotion to the Divine Hearts. All who leave our house should bear away as a heritage, love and devotion to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

But we must manifest our cherished devotion not by word alone, but by all that we have, by all that we are. Every true Daughter of Our Lady of Charity should be a living manifestation, an exterior demonstration of the Heart of Jesus and

Mary! Everything in her should show it, reveal it, and render it in some wise visible.

What does that require? To be to souls what Jesus and Mary are to us! All kindness and all love, all tenderness and all mercy. To treat them as the Heart of Jesus treats us; with consideration, with delicacy, with respect, although with authority, but with an authority diluted, impregnated with love!

To manifest the Heart of Jesus is so to live in Him and by Him that we are like Him and that in our life, He appears more than we do. If we truly love this Adorable Heart, it must be so, for, according to St. Francis de Sales, "Love supposes resemblance and if it does not find it, it produces it."

To love is to copy. We should resemble the Heart of Jesus and Mary since we love It!

Others must recognize It and love It in us! In our manner of speaking, acting and dealing with souls, they must feel the Heart," i.e., the love, but the love of Jesus and Mary! This will be, I assure you, the most efficacious means of manifesting and promoting that devotion, of making it loved and adopted by those around us, for example is the most eloquent of sermons!

"Finally," says our Bl. Founder, "engrave this upon your heart: that you are the Daughters of the most holy Heart of the Queen of Heaven. Never forget that beautiful name; keep it ever before your eyes, write it in your spirit, imprint it in the depths of your soul, carry it in your mouth; that is to say, by the grace of God, let all your thoughts and affections, all your words and actions, tend to render you worthy daughters of the most holy Heart of the Mother of Jesus—tend to please and delight her Heart in every possible way."

The Annals of our Monastery of Guigamp, mentioning the death of Sr. M. of St. Gertrude Padelt, which occurred in 1759, say that this Religious held extraordinary communications with Our Lord. One of these reminds us of those of Bl. Margaret Mary. One day Sr. M. of St. Gertrude was in her cell engaged in spiritual reading when in spite of her resistance, the feeling of God's presence became so impressive that it caused her to fall upon her knees and adore Him. Then an extraordinary light showed her all the sins of her life, their number and gravity. She was terrified, yet at the same time holily confident, and cried out, "Oh Lord, if it please Thy divine mercy to forgive me these sins, I will begin a new life and do sincere penance for them." Our Lord then appeared to her and, holding His hand on His divine Heart, said to her with incomprehensible love, "What, my child, could it be possible that He Who suffered this wound would refuse to forgive you." Shortly before her death she heard the same voice say: "Prepare thyself by death for love and by love for death!"

Third Point.—To serve the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary, to consecrate our whole life and all that we are to honour and manifest the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, to conform ourselves to their holy Will in all things and to hasten to its accomplishment is to serve Them; but that is not all They demand from the Daughters of Our Lady of Charity. The special service they expect from us is pointed out by our Blessed Founder in words which, for us, should be a formal command: "Lo, It is open, this wondrous furnace; bring, bring hearts to Its sacred fires, or this furnace of love feeds only on hearts!"

"Oh, no, no, it is not enough to bring hearts near this living furnace; we must carry them, throw them, plunge them into it!" And in such a way that they may never leave it and may be wholly consumed in these divine fires!

Every true daughter of the first Apostle of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary should also be an apostle, a purveyor of this furnace of love. She should labour with indefatigable zeal to supply It with the fuel which its incomprehensible intensity demands.

O Heart of Jesus and Mary, true fire of love, how happy are Thy victims! Would that I had the hearts of all men in my hands; how gladly would I hurl them into the sacred fire which gives true life by making them live and die of love!

Oh, too happy daughters of the King and Queen of Love, let us all set to work; let us run after souls by our prayers and sighs, let us wound them with darts of mortification, let us pursue them without any respite until we have overtaken them! Let us take firm hold of them, let us clasp them in the bonds of charity, not to fix their attention upon ourselves (God forbid) but to plunge them immediately into the Divine Furnace!

No, nothing should daunt us in this search, this hunt for souls! What matter the trial, suffering, sacrifice, provided that we can bear hearts as trophies to that furnace whose loving flames should be our aliment and our element.

REFLECTIONS FOR THE LAST DAY.

If there is nothing more important than to enter seriously into retreat from the very beginning of the exercises, it is no less important to remain there to the end.

Let us distrust our inconstancy and frivolity of mind, which in the first place, might prevent us from entering heart and soul into the retreat, and then tempt us to leave it. The retreat usually lasts eight days and there are some who only enter seriously into it on the third day and on the fifth day begin to think of the end of it.

We must think neither of the days that have passed nor of those to follow, but live in the present "in the heart of the retreat," as if it were never to end; this is the way to begin it well, continue it better and end it best.

The feeling that should dominate us at the close of a retreat is a lively gratitude for the inestimable favours which our Divine Spouse bestowed upon us during those holy days. If this gratitude is sincere, it should produce in us a strong determination, a firm resolution to live a life all pure and holy to please and resemble our Beloved.

"Lavi pedes meos, quomodo inquinabo illos," we should cry out with the Spouse in the Canticles: "I have washed my feet, how could I sully them again?" During this retreat I have been cleansed in the waters of penance, I have been purified from the least stains. After having so endeavoured to cleanse my soul, could I consent to sully myself again, even my feet; that is to say, could I again commit those petty faults and imperfections?

"Lavi pedes meos, quomodo inquimabo illos?"

and yet we must again travel the same way as before the retreat: I will again have to face the same dangers with the same occasions of sin, the same dust and the same mire; so how shall I manage not even to sully my feet? By dint of extraordinary circumspection and extreme prudence, assuredly, but also by holding fast to my retreat resolutions.

These resolutions should be neither general nor abstract. It is not enough to say: "I will begin a new life; I will be wholly God's." But we must make a clear and precise resolution and say, for example: "I will be more careful of charity"; to that end I will particularly avoid speaking to such and such a Sister whose conversation exposes me to failing in it. I will not speak of what does not concern me."

Or else: "I will be more punctual with regard to the exercises, and will leave at the first sound of the bell; if I fail, I shall impose such and such a penance upon myself. Or, I will pay more attention to the Rule of Silence, especially on such an occasion with such a person, in such a place, at such an hour.

If we limit ourselves to writing these resolutions or others in our retreat note-book, without writing them on our mind, and still more deeply in our heart, however sincere and precise they may be, we run the risk of always having the same reasons to repeat them in every retreat.

Every morning we should renew the feelings which animated us when we made them, and then determine how we will keep them during that day.

It is especially during the days following the retreat that we must cling firmly to our resolutions; for very frequently all the fruit of the

exercises depends on those first days, a fruit of which the demon is so jealous. Let us be on our guard against his snares; he is lying awake for our return from solitude. Let us be in wait for him too and be determined to conquer him since we can do so as long as we will.

Prayers.

Which it is customary to say every evening during the annual retreat:

1. The "Veni Creator" to ask light from the Holy Ghost.
2. The Litany according to the day of the week to obtain the grace to make a good retreat.
3. The "Gloria Patri" thrice in honour of the Most Holy Trinity.
4. The "Miserere" in a spirit of penance.
5. The prose of the Holy Ghost for the Church.
6. The "Veni Sancte" for the Bishop of the diocese.
7. The Ante Thronum for the Confessor of the House.
8. The "Sub Tuum" and the "Monstra Te" thrice for the Superior.
9. The "Ave Maris Stella" for the Community.
10. The "Salve Regina" for the Institute.
11. The Memorare for those who labour for the salvation of souls.
12. A Pater and Ave for the conversion of the Penitents.
13. The "Angeli Archangeli" for sinners.
14. The "Ave Cor" to ask Jesus and Mary for the virtues of Their Divine Hearts.
15. The "De Profundis" for the Faithful Depart-

SUPPLEMENT

OPTIONAL SUBJECTS.

I. HUMILITY.

Every daughter of Father Eudes finds in the pages which this great Master of the Spiritual Life devotes to Humility in his book, "The Life and Reign of Jesus," and especially in the seventeen meditations forming the eighth part of that work, a solid and profound doctrine capable of leading her to the heroic practice of that virtue. This doctrine is summed up in the Protestation of Humility which he puts on the lips of his children every morning:

"O Lord Jesus Christ, humbly prostrate at the feet of Thy Divine Majesty, we acknowledge before the face of Heaven and earth, that we are nothing, we can do nothing, we are worth nothing, we have nothing except sin. We are useless servants, born children of wrath, the last of men and the first of sinners. To us, therefore, be confusion and shame, to Thee be praise and honour and glory forever and ever. Amen. Have mercy on us, O Lord Jesus Christ."

Among the Apostles, there was one whom Jesus loved particularly, whom He preferred to all the rest, even allowing him to recline upon His Heart and giving him the sweet title of beloved. Among the virtues, there is one which Jesus loved with a

special affection, which He preferred to all the others; it is the darling virtue of His Heart, one which He wishes to teach us Himself: "Discite a me quia mitis sum et humilis corde." He says: "Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart."

Our Bl. Father Eudes, a perfect imitator of Jesus, shows plainly, both by the tone and number of his meditations on humility, that this virtue is the one he prefers and loves best, the darling virtue of his heart, and his whole life gives him a right to say with Our Lord: "Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart!" Why is this obscure virtue an object of divine predilection?

Ah! The fact is, it restores everything to its pristine truth! And God, Truth Itself, loves nothing so much as truth! When He sees a soul strongly convinced of this great and elementary truth: "God is everything! Everything else but God is nothing,' when He finds her deeply imbued with the idea of her own weakness, her radical impotence for good, her nothingness, in a word, and above all, her baneful inclination to evil. He is irresistibly attracted to her and inclined to fill up the void which this idea makes in her soul.

On the contrary, "no poison kills the body as quickly as pride kills perfection in a soul. And do not say that I am speaking of trifles which are natural to everyone. Oh, no! Beware of treating them lightly; nothing is trifling where the danger is so great."

In the beginning God made everything out of nothing! His pleasure is ever to act thus. Being essentially a Creator, He will not, and it would seem that He cannot, work except on nothingness. He created His most marvellous work, His

most admirable masterpieces, our of nothing! Long ago St. Paul said: "And the base things of the world and the things that are contemptible hath God chosen; and things that are not, that He might bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in His sight." I. Cor. i., 28. 29.

Likewise, when He intends to make use of a soul to do something in her and with her, He wants her in her nothingness and grounds her in it first of all! If that soul resists, if she still remains anything in her own eyes, the great and only ALL Who has only to do with that living nothing, cannot, and will not, make use of her. He rejects her, or waits until she is nothing, until she is nothingness! And does He not employ strong remedies which are repugnant to nature, to bring her to those indispensable dispositions?

Now, has not God declared His intention of employing us in a great work by calling us to the Order of Our Lady of Charity? To save souls is the work of a God. According to St. Denis: "The most divine of all things is to co-operate with God in the salvation of souls." Man can do nothing in this work except by disappearing, annihilating himself completely to make room for Him Who is All and can do all things. For us more than anyone else, on account of our apostolic and divine vocation, the holy virtue of humility is necessary, nay, absolutely indispensable. Without it, God will not employ us; we will be obstacles instead of instruments (if God can have obstacles).

God breaks and rejects those senseless instruments who foolishly attribute to themselves the merit of what He does through them. Is it not sometimes more advantageous for them to be left in idleness than run the risk of sacrilegiously ap-

propriating the Divine work? All the Saints who made so many conquests for God and did so much for the Church, were, in their own eyes, but passive instruments, nothings, nothingness, in a word. They were right, and this precisely explains the admirable fruitfulness of their work.

Let us ever fix ourselves, let us ground ourselves in truth, i.e., in humility, and our work among souls will produce abundant fruit. Let us permeate ourselves with the idea and sentiments of our Bl. Founder in regard to this virtue, and, above all, let it appear in our conduct. Let us love to meditate seriously and assiduously on Chapter xxi. of our Constitution! "Let us be Daughters of humility and we will be sanctified in truth." John xvii., 17.

"Our dear Sr. Mary of the Trinity Cotard, on the eve of the close of her novitiate, performed a truly heroic act of humility. One of the boarders sent out a letter in which she found fault with the Superior's treatment of the novices. As Sister Cotard wrote well and easily, the criticism was imputed to her. Imitating the silence of Our Lord in His Passion, she made no reply, and consented to begin her novitiate over again in penance for her supposed fault. For two years this accusation hung over her, but no complaint escaped her. God justified her only after her Profession. Distrust then gave place to admiration."

Let us humble ourselves because we cannot humble ourselves enough nor low enough! And let us ask Jesus Himself to teach us that darling virtue of His Sacred Heart.

PRAYER.

Prayer! What holy transports and what eagerness that single word should awaken in the soul of a true Spouse of Jesus!

Prayer? Is the burning bush where Moses discovered the secrets of Divine love! It is Mount Sinai, where he conversed familiarly with the August Majesty of God.

Prayer! Is that mysterious night on which Jacob witnessed the holy and secret intercourse of Heaven and earth.

Prayer! Is intimate and familiar, heart to heart converse with our Divine Loved One.

Prayer is the introduction of the soul into the holy cellars where the Spouse inebriates His beloved with the exquisite wine of His pure and consuming love!

Prayer is the delightful country of which the spouse speaks when he says: "Veni, dilecte mi, egrediamur in agrum commoremur in villis": "Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field, let us abide in the villages." Cant. vii. 2.

"A thousand years of worldly pleasures," says Father Eudes, "are not worth a single moment of the delights a soul experiences whose sole pleasure is to converse with Him in prayer."

If we only knew the blessings that lie hidden in prayer! If we knew all that it can teach us and its joys! Above all, if we knew how far it can lead us, the heights of contemplation to which it can raise us, how our souls would crave for it! The craving of the thirsty roe for the running waters would not be comparable to ours!

Fools that we are! We complain of being poor and we deprive ourselves of vast treasures through our own fault!

Lastly, prayer is the occupation of the Angels, of the Blessed in Heaven; it is the life of God Himself!

From all Eternity, the three Divine Persons have been engaged in contemplating and loving each other!

The life of Jesus upon earth was but one continual prayer, continual contemplation before the Majesty of His Father, Whom He could not lose sight of for a single moment. The whole life of the Saint was but a participation, more or less great, in that divine prayer or our Master and Model.

Love loves to be occupied with its object. The Daughter of Our Lady of Charity, therefore, should make her whole life one prayer, one amorous contemplation of the perfections of God. And let her not excuse herself on the pretext of works of zeal! Jesus and the Saints have laboured more than she does; besides, it is prayer that makes work fruitful.

"Prayer is to the soul what water is to the fish," says St. Chrysostom. The Religious who neglects prayer knows nothing about the Spiritual life, for, according to Bl. Father Eudes: "The earth which bears us, the air we breathe, the bread we eat, the heart which beats in our bosom, are not as necessary for the life of our body as prayer is for the Christian life. Therefore," he adds, "I exhort and conjure you, in the name of God, to act so that it be not in vain that the amiable Jesus delights in conversing with us in prayer, but taste and see by your own experience, that "there is no bitterness in His conversation, no weariness in His company, but only pleasure and happiness." (Life and Reign).

We must not think that prayer is merely the

matter of the hour, or half-hour, that we devote to it morning and evening, nor that we are souls of prayer because we spend in it the time prescribed by our Constitutions. We do not call a man an author, painter or sculptor because he writes, paints or carves for one or two hours a day. He can only lay claim to an art which he practises during the greater part of his days. We will be souls of prayer and will derive full fruit from that divine exercise only in so far as we devote the greater part of our time to it.

The thought of prayer should take possession of us on our awakening, occupy us all day long without ever leaving us; at least we must hasten to revert to it as soon as we perceive any wandering from it. Not that we must chain our imagination to the more or less restricted bounds of the subject on which we meditated; it suffices to be occupied with God, or with the things of God.

"The third method of prayer," says our Bl. Founder, "consists in performing all our actions, even the least, prayerfully, offering them to God when beginning them, and raising our heart to God from time to time, whilst occupied with them. To perform our actions thus, is to work in a spirit of prayer, is to be continually engaged in prayer, according to the command of Our Lord, Who wishes us to pray always. It is an excellent and very easy method of keeping ourselves always in the presence of God."

And do we not find the very same doctrine in the Second Article of the Directory? It is a very important article and one which, if faithfully practised, would make each of us a true soul of prayer.

"By the habitual thought of God," says St. Paul of the Cross, "we manage to pray twenty-

four hours a day; that is to say, to do all our actions with heart and mind raised to God. If you cannot pray much, to work well is to pray always. Be attentive to your duties, and at the same time be attentive to God, frequently plunging your heart into the vast ocean of divine love. Whilst the body is engaged in its work, the soul may do its own by thinking of God and loving Him. So, I particularly recommend you to keep yourself in the presence of God, not by a dry and sterile study, but in a loving, quiet, peaceful way, so as to permeate yourself with His spirit."

But how many souls who think they are doing wonders in prayer, merely amuse themselves for want of having trained themselves to it, on solid principles and practical and substantial instructions.

Our Directory, speaking of this Exercise, warns us against such a danger, saying: "As regards prayer, their training and practice shall be guided by the instructions contained in 'The Introduction to the Devout Life,' 'The Treatise on the Love of God,' 'The Spiritual Conferences,' and similar books of piety; and great regard shall be paid to the attraction and guidance of the Holy Spirit and to the direction that is given them. They shall never amuse themselves with subtleties and useless reasonings, which only lead to error and deception. The earnest and serious practice of the exercise of Prayer is one of the most important duties of religion and of the spiritual life."

Let us not lose our time in prayer, and therefore "before prayer let us prepare our soul and be not like one who tempts God."

Let us put ourselves in the dispositions pointed out by our Bl. Founder: "When you go to prayer, remember that you are going to continue the

prayer of Jesus Christ; you should pray, then, as He prayed, as He would pray if He were there, and as He prays in Heaven and on our Altars, where he is ever present and continually occupied in prayer with His Father. Unite yourself, therefore, with His love, humility, purity and sanctity, His attention and the holy dispositions and intentions with which He prays. Now, among these dispositions, there are four in particular which are most marked and most necessary to glorify God and obtain what we ask." (Life and Reign).

Humility, confidence, purity of intention and perseverance are those "salient dispositions" which our Bl. Founder wishes us to have for prayer, dispositions which he carefully develops in the same chapter.

Let us faithfully follow our Father in the way he has marked out for us, and guided by his experience, we will certainly attain the degree of prayer to which our Divine Spouse calls us. Perhaps we will even be so happy some day as to intone that Canticle of Canticles which is the chant of every loving and contemplative soul, of every soul of prayer. "It is the Canticle of love," says St. Bernard; "no one can sing it unless unction has taught it to him; if it is not a quivering of the lips, it is a hymn of the heart; it is not a sound from the lips, but a joyous impulse; it is a harmony of wills rather than words. It is not heard exteriorly; there is no echo; no one hears it but she who sings it, and He to whom she sings it, the spouse and her Beloved. It is a nuptial chant, expressing the chaste and delightful embrace of souls, harmony of sentiments, and mutual correspondence of affections.

"The novice soul does not know it. To sing it, she must have attained perfect, marriageable age, and her virtues must be worthy of her Spouse."

III.

MORTIFICATION.

"Long prayers without mortification are long inutilities," says St. Theresa. "My daughters," she says in another place, "if you want to be true Religious, dear friends of Our Lord, your life must be a martyrdom. Have courage, therefore, to say in good faith, 'we have come here to suffer for Jesus Christ, and not to enjoy ourselves.' Let us fully renounce our own satisfaction, let us accustom ourselves to overcome the desires of nature until the body is completely submissive to the spirit. When we can thus break our will we have unquestionably reached the height of perfection."

According to St. Theresa and Father Faber, mortification is nothing more than love of Jesus, feeling the need of assuming that form either to imitate our Divine Spouse or to express its ardour, or, in virtue of an instinct of self-preservation, to assure its own perseverance. Without mortification there is no real or lasting love, for a certain degree of it is needed to avoid sin and keep the Commandments. "Half the obstacles we meet with in the spiritual life proceed from the body and the perfidious concurrence of our senses with our vilest passions," says Father Faber.

Like St. Theresa, the Tenth Constitution wishes us to endeavour, first of all, "to mortify our self love, our self sufficiency, our self will and our own passions." Exterior mortification is only a consequence of interior mortification; the latter should always precede and accompany the former.

On this subject more than any other, our Bl. Founder does not leave us in ignorance. His whole doctrine tends to mortification, to the com-

plete subjection of fallen nature to the grace of Jesus. He realized that true life consists only in death to the world, to the senses, to self, and that it is this work of death which constitutes mortification.

Moreover, like St. Theresa, he finds that this mortification, this simple death, is not sufficient for his love, nor for the love of his children. Death, yes, but the death of martyrdom, he desires and embraces it so as to prove his love for the divine Martyr of Calvary. In fifteen admirable pages (Life and Reign of Jesus) he endeavours to show us how we can be martyrs. And here, as elsewhere, his example sustains his doctrine. His life was but one long, merciless penance with which neither labours nor missions, illness nor old age, could reason. His love of suffering yielded only to holy obedience.

Our first Mothers have marked out the way for us in the practice of this virtue. And what heroic examples they have left us.

The V. H. Mother Mary of St. Augustine Leboucher, in order to overcome her delicacy, forced herself to swallow infectious spittle after keeping it in her mouth a long time.

After a severe attack of apoplexy, Mother M. Angelica de Balde found it impossible to stay in bed. She used to spend the whole day in a chair, and for the first time she leaned against it. During her twenty-six years in religion she had never been known to allow herself that comfort.

Another disciplined herself so severely that she had to lay a cloth in her cell so as not to stain the floor with blood.

Another feasted on the crumbs of hard bread picked up on the infirmary table.

During the greatest heat of summer, a good Sister made herself a drink from the settlings of some oil which had been left for a long time in the bottom of a pitcher.

Others did not lay aside their instruments of penance, which became blunt upon their bodies, without even quenching their thirst for sufferings. Lastly, during illness, all showed unlimited mortification and self forgetfulness. One day the Sister who was waiting on V.H. Mother M. of St. Paul Poutrel, misunderstood the directions of the cook and brought her a piece of meat which was badly tainted. The patient endeavoured to eat it without saying anything, but the violence it imposed upon her made her change colour. The cook soon noticed her mistake, and came to her in tears, to ask her pardon. But the patient answered: "My dear Sister. you are weeping over something which gives me joy. The good God loves me more than you do; you would never have thought of giving me such a goodly share of the last cup that was offered Him, when, on the Cross, He was nearer death than I. Pray do not mention it to the Sister Infirmarian nor to our Mother."

Mortification of self-love yielded in nothing to mortification of the body. At the close of the superiority of Mother Mary of St. Paul, says the author of our "Origines," Mgr. de Tréguier, was strongly prejudiced against her. The Confessor told her that His Grace had changed his opinion completely. Her humility then revealed itself in all its simplicity. "I assure you," she said, "I have never worried about my justification before men; I left it to God, before Whom I wish to be justified of my sins by a complete satisfaction. Nothing was more dear to me than

this humiliation." Her director wished to know her feelings regarding those who had calumniated her to the Bishop. "Not a day passed," she rejoined, "without my forgiving them. Perhaps they, too, were deceived, and did not intend to harm me. However that may be, the suffering I have endured is fully compensated by the happiness of dying a Daughter of Our Lady of Charity."

The Annals of all our Houses are full of similar incidents and bear witness to the spirit of mortification which animated the first Sisters of our Order. Ah, they all realized that souls are saved only by the Cross. Let us realize it too, let us prove ourselves worthy daughters of such mothers by walking cheerfully in the path of mortification which is no other than the royal road of the Cross of Jesus.

St. Vincent Ferrier insists on the necessity of following the rules of discretion in the practice of mortification, however. It is a point of very great importance in the spiritual life, and we cannot warn souls too strongly against the ruses of the demon and the gross illusions of pride and self-will.

"Do not," says Ven. Louis de Blois, "rashly undertake extraordinary austerities, although the majority of the Saints have practised them. Being enlightened by the Holy Ghost, they were sure of pleasing God by doing so. But many, by indiscreetly abandoning themselves to the first fervour of their conversion, laid too heavy a burden upon nature and rendered themselves incapable of devoting themselves to the service of God. The hair-shirt, vigils, fasts and other like mortifications embraced in the cause of God, are pleasing to Him, and according to the strength of each,

serve not a little to overcome the flesh. But true love, which draws man closer to God, produces the same effect in a more prompt and efficacious manner.

"God tries, in a way He knows is best suited to them, those who abandon themselves entirely to Him and who are ready humbly to receive all afflictions from His hand and bear them patiently as long as He pleases. Do not, then, oppress your body with excessive abstinence, too long vigils and austerites of your own choice; neither take too assiduous care of it. Maintain a holy discretion in all things.

"Above all, do not undertake anything without the advice of a prudent director, lest by following your own ideas you excessively weaken your body, and rendering yourself incapable of any useful work, lose the fruit of your labours altogether. What God requires of you is purity of heart and not the destruction of the body. He wants it to be subject to the spirit; He does not want it to be oppressed."

Moreover, for an attentive soul, truly desirous of imitating her Crucified Jesus, everything becomes food for mortification, and for one that is denied her, she knows how to find ten more. Hence she cares little about the form; she is attached to it at heart, and that heart is everywhere.

IV. EXAMEN.

All the masters of the spiritual life agree as to the importance of examination of conscience. They unanimously indicate it as an indispensable means to attain self-knowledge, a knowledge without which all our efforts will come to naught.

We must know ourselves; to know ourselves, we must consider ourselves attentively, study ourselves seriously and examine ourselves scrupulously. Hence, every soul desiring perfection must apply herself daily to the Examen of Foresight, particular Examen, and general Examen.

1. Examen of Foresight.—This should be made after the morning meditation. When we wake in the morning, and in our morning prayer, to conform with the instructions of our Directory, we must foresee what we will have to do during the day and the faults to which we will be most exposed. Speaking of this Examen, St. Francis de Sales says:

"Foresee the affairs which will require prudence during the day, the occasions you will have to glorify God, and the temptations you will have to anger, vanity or any other passion that may arise. After this inspection, prepare yourself by a holy resolution to profit by every means of serving God and advancing in perfection; arm yourself with all your strength of mind to avoid or to combat and overcome whatever obstacles you may encounter.

"But this simple resolution is not enough; we must sustain it by preparing the means we will have to carry it out. For example, if I foresee that I have to deal with a person whose anger is easily aroused, I will not only take precautions against offending her, but also prevent her anger, by planning to speak as graciously as possible; or else I will induce someone to go with me, etc."

II. Particular Examen.—Is usually made about mid-day, but a soul eager to make progress makes it every time she enters into herself, "at least every hour," says St. Ignatius.

This examen bears on the manner in which we perform such a grave duty, such and such an important exercise, in which we practise such and such a virtue, or what causes us to fall into such and such a fault. We must attack our predominant fault first of all.

Like the general examen, this particular examen includes five acts: 1. Return thanks to God for the benefits He has bestowed upon us: in the order of nature, creation, preservation, paternal Providence; in the order of grace: redemption, justification, wondrous patience and mercy, vocation to the faith, to the religious state, particular graces; in the order of glory: eternal life which God has prepared for me after this one.

2. Ask God for light to know your faults, failings and imperfections, and His holy grace to repent of them and eradicate them.

3. Then examine yourself on the point of your particular examen. Make a minute and exact survey of every hour of the day and demand an account of your soul of the particular sin or fault that you desire to correct; reflect whether, as soon as you awoke, or after your morning prayer, you resolved to watch carefully over yourself with regard to that sin or thought, whether after every fall you proved your repentance to God by some exterior sign which your Sisters did not notice.

4. Ask pardon for your faults through the following motives of contrition: the pains of Purgatory, the degrees of glory lost for all Eternity, the danger of falling into greater faults and into tepidity and perhaps of never attaining perfection, to the great prejudice of your soul and that of many others; the Holy Spirit grieved, the Heart of Jesus wounded, the perfection of the

Divine Model from which you have strayed, the sovereign goodness of God; His Infinite Amiability and His Infinite Majesty despised.

Then produce affections of fear, confusion, regret, hatred of sin, love of God and confidence in Him. Ask pardon of our dear Spouse through the Divine Heart of Jesus and Mary, invoke the holy Angels, your holy protectors and patrons, all the holy Religious of the Order, and especially the Saint of the day.

5. Excite a firm purpose. Firmly resolve, with the grace of God, to correct each and everyone of your faults. Seek the causes and occasions of your sins and faults, as well as your failings and imperfections, seek the remedies to be employed.

Form an efficacious resolution to watch more carefully over yourself; call to witness this resolution, and to aid you, Jesus, your dear Spouse, Mary, your good Mother, and all the Saints to whom you have a special devotion.

It is not necessary to formulate all these acts, it suffices to make them mentally and requires but a moment.

III. General Examen.—The method for the general examen is the same as for the particular examen.

As the Catechism teaches, examine yourself on the sins you have committed in thought, word, deed and omission, going over in succession all that you have done that day: 'In the morning, awakening, the daily offering; rising, preparation for Meditation, prayer and examen of foresight, Mass, Holy Communion, thanksgiving, morning Office, the occupations of your charge, especially if you are employed in the Classes, particular examen. In the evening: Dinner, recreation, use

of time and of leisure moments, if you have had any, the beads or Rosary, spiritual reading, the Way of the Cross, if you have the good habit of making it every day, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, evening meditation, supper, recreation, the Angelus, night prayer, preparation for Meditation; noon and night, examine yourself on the four ordinary Vows, and on your private Vows, if you have made any, on the promises and resolutions of the retreat, the month, the day; on charity, humility, patience, mortification, regularity, religious modesty and silence. "If any extraordinary duty has been laid upon them, or if they have had permission to speak in private, let them examine the subject of their conversation, for it is on such occasions that there is danger and that falls are probable," says the fifth Article of the Directory. The same may be said of the parlour, of intercourse with the children and others.

It is impossible for a soul who regularly and seriously makes this triple examen of conscience, not to attain high perfection. And the more we are burdened with exterior occupations, the more necessary is this examen to maintain our purity of conscience and intention and holy recollection.

Without it, we run the risk of acting humanly, of being a great deal disturbed, hence of fatiguing ourselves beyond measure, and all to our own loss. Examen of conscience is the mirror of the soul who studies herself only to bring and keep herself in a condition to please her Divine Spouse.

Let us conclude by saying with Father Roothan (Notes on exercises of St. Ignatius): A fact, certain of itself and which faith does not allow us to doubt, is that the greatest obstacle to the

solid fruit of the particular examen (the same may be understood of every examen) is usually a secret presumption, which is either completely hidden or else not clearly known to us, as a result of which we place all our confidence in our good resolutions and in our own resources. Now, does not the Apostle warn us that "Sufficientia nostra ex Deo est": "Our sufficiency is from God!"

V. DIRECTION.

All the Saints agree in saying that direction rightly understood is one of the most efficacious means of advancing surely and rapidly in the path of perfection. No one sufficeth for himself; this is a general and providential law.

"We must know," says St. Vincent Ferrier in his Treatise on the Spiritual Life (Chap. IV.), "that one who has a Director by whom he allows himself to be guided, whom he obeys in all his actions great and small, attains perfection more quickly and easily than he could by himself, even if he were of extraordinary intelligence and had books explaining the nature of every virtue and the means to acquire it.

"I go further and say that Our Lord, without Whom we can do nothing, will never grant His grace to anyone who, having at his disposal a man capable of instructing and directing him, neglects this powerful means of sanctification, thinking he is sufficient for himself and that by his own efforts he can seek and find the means of salvation. For this path of obedience is the royal road which leads souls safely to the top of that mysterious ladder on which Our Lord appeared to lean. It was the road travelled by the Holy

Fathers in the desert, and, as a general rule, all those who attained perfection followed this way; at least it was only by a privilege and a singular grace that God Himself instructed a few souls who had no one to direct them.

It was thanks to the direction and counsels of the Heavenly Azariah that the young and inexperienced Tobias happily reached the end of his journey.

"Go find Ananias, and he will tell you what you must do," said Our Lord to Saul, when He could have told him directly what designs He had on him.

"Go, submit that to your Superiors and ask their permission to accomplish it," He said to His saints, after revealing His wishes to them, and He told some of them that obedience to Superiors is more pleasing to Him than the obedience they pretend to render Him by thinking to follow a direct inspiration or formal command. He frequently seems to demand the approbation of Superiors in the direction of souls; in a word, He wants man to be directed by man, and if, like Saul, we ask Him that great and capital question: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me do?" His reply is invariably the same: "Go find Ananias, and he will tell you what you must do." Ananias is our Confessor, who should at the same time be our Director.

The priest in the Confessional is judge, father and doctor. As judge, he should know all our sins; it is his right as it is his duty to question an insufficient accusation, as it is the penitent's duty to answer in all sincerity.

Having accused ourselves of all our sins, the Confession is complete; the priest may wish to stop at that point, and the penitent on her part,

may refuse to countenance further investigation. And yet, is the knowledge of our sins sufficient to enable the priest to fulfil in their integrity, the sublime functions of father and doctor of souls which Holy Church confides to him? Evidently not.

He must know not only the actual good and evil, but the source of both; that is to say, our character, aspirations, defects, virtues, all that goes to make up our moral and supernatural life. If he does not penetrate to the very depths of our conscience, he will never be able to give advice, to guide, to direct, in a word, so as to aid our souls to climb the holy mount of perfection.

To be sure, this direction is not of obligation, but it offers every advantage to a soul when she places her confidence in a Confessor, and is, as it were, an open book in his hand, so that the director can turn every page of that living book and read and re-read, each of its pages. "Have a heart of crystal; fear but one thing—not to be known to your director. How I would like to have my interior in my hands, to reveal it just as it is," wrote Father Lallemant. This childlike simplicity is one of the most necessary qualities in direction.

Let us mention the others, seeing that the soul directed should: 1. Pray much for her direction. 2. Be seriously resolved to become better. 3. Be confident. 4. Obedient. 5. Discreet. 6. Humble. The director, because he is father, is guide; he holds the reigns of the soul; he makes her walk, urges her forward or holds her back on the edge of the abysses; and likewise, in virtue of that same paternity, he encourages, consoles, loves and blesses her. She must go to him as to a father. Hence let her not wonder what she must say.

A child speaking to a father whose prudence and experience, devotedness and love, are known to him, consults only his heart and his needs.

However, to proceed with order, we may speak to our director on all the following points:

1. Practice.—What was our practice during the past month? How often have we been unfaithful to it and from what motives? Was it indifference, forgetfulness, idleness, cowardice or contempt? Did we impose some penance upon ourselves when we failed? Did this practice help us in our interior work?

2. Present state of the Soul.—Are we, at present, cheerful or sorrowful, at peace or troubled and tempted, fervent or languid? What is our desire or resolution with regard to perfection? Practically, what are we doing to obtain it?

3. End of Efforts.—What is the end of our efforts and of all our interior work at present?

4. Predominant Fault.—Do we seriously endeavour to know ourselves? Do we know our predominant fault? Do we combat it? How? What victories have we gained over it during the month? What virtue gives us most trouble? Where do our difficulties lie? Do we surmount them, and how? Have we more or less than in the past? "Usually," says Father Roothaan, "every man has one vice or evil inclination which may be called predominant and which is the cause and root of all his faults."

"And supposing you should find several of these inclinations or defects in yourself, it would, nevertheless, be useful to select one in particular and attack it with all your might. After eradicating it, you may devote yourself in the same way, to conquering the others, one by one."

5. Direction of Thoughts.—What idea occupies our mind? What is the usual subject of our preoccupation? In a word, what is our dominant thought? What thought brings rest to mind and heart?

6. How do we apply ourselves to the remote preparation for meditation, i.e., how do we stand with regard to the habitual remembrance of the holy presence of God and the avoiding of the least faults necessary to acquire that interior purity which attracts God to us? Are we making progress in the interior spirit? Do we easily think of God and the things of God? How much time do we spend without thinking of our dear Jesus?

Proximate Preparation.—Do we neglect it? Do we recall the subject of our meditation as soon as we awake? Do we specify the points? Do we propose an end to ourselves? Do we prepare for it whilst retiring to rest? Do we fall asleep with that thought? What thoughts occupy us before we fall asleep? Are we faithful in banishing every useless thought in the morning so as to think of the subject of our meditation and to keep ourselves perfectly recollected both interiorly and exteriorly, until we are ready to begin our meditation? Does the Holy Spirit inspire us with other thoughts on awakening?

Immediate Preparation.—How do we make it? Do we penetrate ourselves with the thought of the holy presence of God? Of His infinite majesty and of our own baseness and nothingness?

For meditation itself, what method do we follow? Which of the three faculties of the soul do we use most easily? Is this exercise easy or difficult? What trials and what joys de we find in it? What do we most frequently ask of Jesus?

What resolution do we usually take? And above all, how do we observe it? About how often do we renew it during the day, recalling the ideas which inspired it?

7. Examen of Foresight.—Have we really remarked this Article of the Directory: "Beginning to dress—then they shall prepare for the morning exercise, reflecting briefly on the imperfections to which they are subject and the resolutions they should make against them?" Do we make this Examen regularly? Do we foresee the occasions and means of carrying them out?

8. Mass and Communion.—With what dispositions do we assist at this great Sacrifice of Love? How do we occupy ourselves? What sentiments does it awaken in us?

What desires does the thought of Holy Communion excite in us? Are they more ardent when we communicate frequently or are they somewhat abated? How and by what acts do we prepare for that divine banquet? How do we feel before, during and after Holy Communion? What does Jesus say to us during thanksgiving? What does He ask of us? What do we ask of Him? How long do we retain the impression of Holy Communion? Is Spiritual Communion habitual to us? How often and how fervently do we make it every day?

9. Divine Office.—Do we conform to what the Constitution and Directory prescribe on this important subject in regard to chant, psalmody and the recitation of the Divine Office? What thought most frequently occupies us? How do we spend the five minutes' preparation? And during the Office itself, do we unite with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, with the Church Militant and Church Triumphant? (There should be no difference be-

tween a choir of virgins and a choir of angels). When we say our Office in private, how do we say it?

10. Particular Examen.—How and on what do we make it? The matter of the particular examen is contained in the three words spoken by the priest when he offers the Sacred Host, says Father Roothaan: "For my sins, for my offences, for my innumerable negligences."

1. Sins.—Every sin or fault, properly called so, grave or slight, of thought, word, action or even omission, which we are accustomed to commit frequently.

2.—Offences.—Faults less properly so called, or involuntary, which it is as difficult for our weakness to avoid in the midst of so many dangers as for the most careful traveller, not to stumble frequently in spite of himself in a road alternately rough and smooth. And yet the good and faithful servant, with the aid of Christian vigilance and by means of the particular examen, can and ought to diminish the number of these offences. The Lord our God asks solicitude in His service, the Prophet tells us: "Et sollicitum ambulare cum Deo tuo": "And walk solicitous with Thy God." Mich. vi., 8.

3. Negligences.—I do not mean more considerable negligences which go as far as the sin of omission; but those which gradually glide into our actions, and which, without destroying all the merit, render them less perfect and less pleasing to God. These negligences are really innumerable, whether we consider the want of purity and strength in the intention, or cast our glance upon a host of ways or circumstances, which, added to our actions, would give them the lustre and

perfection which the Majesty of the God we serve and the degree of light He bestows upon our souls, demands. We propose, then, by means of the particular examen: 1, to destroy sin; 2, to destroy, or at least to diminish our offences; 3, to destroy, or at least to diminish our negligences by frequent practice of the virtues which should adorn each of our actions and embellish our whole life.

Have we been careful to note our failings and our progress and to compare each day, each week, each month with the preceding one? Do we seek the cause of these faults so as to destroy it? What fruit do we derive from this practice?

11. Spiritual Reading.—Do we love spiritual reading? What kind do we like best? What end do we propose to ourselves? What time do we devote to it? What profit do we derive from it? Do we not seek to read much rather than to read well? Do we read through vanity, to adorn our mind, and not to touch our heart and sanctify our soul?

12. Optional Exercises.—What are our devotional practices? Do we make the Stations of the Cross daily? For what intention and in what dispositions? How do we say our Rosary or beads? What are our usual aspirations?

13. Meals.—How do we act in the Refectory? What thoughts occupy us? Do we observe modesty as prescribed? As Article VI. of the Directory prescribes, "Do we never leave the table without having mortified ourselves in something?" What mortification do we practise at each meal? How do we say the "Benedicite" and grace?

14. Charge.—Are we pleased with our charge or not? Why? What difficulties or what consola-

tions do we find in it? How and in what spirit do we fulfil it? Do we give ourselves to the spirit of Our Lord and frequently ask His help in the exercise of our charge? Do we throw its burden on others without necessity? Are we attached to it?

15. Recreation.—Are we faithful in saying the prayer taught us in the Novitiate whilst going to Recreation (as before each Exercise)? Do we go with preparation and devotion? Do we love this exercise? What faults do we commit at it? Of what do we most willingly speak? What fruit do we derive from it? Do we lose sight of the holy presence of God? When the Obedience bell rings, do ws leave a phrase or a word unfinished? Do we assist at the latter Exercise in the spirit of humility and docility prescribed by our holy observances? Are we prompt to retire as soon as it is over?

16. Silence.—How do we spend the time of silence or of recollection? Do we really possess, and above all, do we practise, Article VIII. of the Directory? How do we observe the ordinary silence? the grant silence? silence, not merely of word. but also of action, look, manner, attitude, etc.? Do we never speak in the regular places—chapel, dormitory, refectory?

17. General Examen and Confession.—How do we make the general examen? What difficulty do we find? What fruit do we draw from it? Is Confession hard for us? Why? Do we go in spirit of faith? Are we at ease with our Confessor? Do we open our whole soul to Him? Do we love and do we follow his teachings? Do we follow his counsels? Do we have recourse to an extraordinary confessor without real need?

18. Last Exercises of the Day.—How do we end our day? What are our last acts? Our last practices and prayers? Are we prompt in undressing and in dressing as the Directory recommends? How do we occupy ourselves during that time? With what thoughts do we fall asleep?

19. Virtues.—Which do we prefer? What is the motive of our preference? What are we doing to acquire it? (1) Charity—"Above all things," as Const. XIX. says, "do we do our utmost to cherish and increase charity in ourselves?" Do we sincerely love all our Sisters? Do we entertain any natural sympathy or antipathy? Do we avoid every word and act which might wound our Sisters? If we happen to offend anyone, how and in what dispositions do we repair our fault? Do we frequently meditate on Const. XIX.? What acts of charity do we perform? Can we put ourselves about to oblige our neighbour? Do we excuse our Sister when anyone speaks to her disadvantage? Are the griefs and joys of our Sisters ours? Do we endeavour to console them in their sufferings? Do we often pray for them? Are we kind, gentle and affable to those who are working with us?

(2) Humility: What do we think of this virtue? What need do we feel of it? What do we think of ourselves? How do we feel when we are forgotten? When we are reproved? When we receive a humiliation in public or in private? When we are wrongly or rightly accused? When our Superiors seem to make no account of us and to deem us incapable of anything? If our Sisters say something which hurts us, how do we bear it? Do we feel any bitterness, annoyance, or coldness towards them?

(3) Mortification: Have we the spirit and love of this virtue? Do we love, do we seek what costs, what troubles us? Do we prefer the least and the hardest to nature in the way of clothing, cell, bed, food? Do we desire exterior and corporal mortification? How do we perform those granted us? With what intention? How do we stand with regard to the mortification of our senses interior and exterior?

20. Regularity. — Does the Rule rule us in everything? Are we late for any of the exercises? Do we dispense ourselves from any of the exercises without permission and serious cause? Do we attend them in the spirit of the Rule interior and exterior? Do we assiduously meditate on our holy Observances?

21. Vows.—(1) Poverty: Do we practically love it? Do we keep anything superfluous? Do we work like poor people? Do we lose a moment? Do we spend our time on useless matters, reading or pleasant work? Do we take care of our clothing and of everything in our use? Do we not limit ourselves to the practice of the Vow without aspiring to the Virtue of Poverty?

(2) Chastity: Have we a high esteem and ardent love for the angelic virtue, which makes us the Spouse of the King of angels and virgins? Does our heart belong wholly to Jesus? Do we rob Him of any affection to bestow it upon creatures? Is there anything human in our love for our Superiors and Sisters? (It is best to mention temptations against this virtue in Confession).

(3) Obedience: How do we practise this virtue? Do we see God in our Superiors? Is it hard to bend our will, to submit our judgment? Do we cut short all reasoning with regard to

commands? Do we dwell on the form of the command? Do we ever say anything against Obedience, against the orders given us, against our Superiors or against their manner of government?

(4) Zeal for Souls: How do we observe our fourth Vow? Have we a burning desire to save souls? Do we pray much for that intention? Do we offer all our actions, prayers and sufferings and our whole life for that intention? If we are in the Classes, how do we act with the children? Do we consider them in the spirit of faith, as souls redeemed by the Blood of our Spouse? Do we ever act through caprice, temper, habit, or routine? Do we watch over all the corporal and spiritual needs of our children? Do they ever suffer through our fault? Do we give them an example of regularity and of every virtue? Have we any preference except for the poorest and most miserable? Are we kind, gentle and compassionate? Are we Mothers, in a word?

Are we discouraged at our apparent insuccess? Do we sanctify all the suffering they cause us, by bearing it with a view to obtaining the graces they need?

Do we ever let the children suffer under the specious pretext that they ought to expiate their past sins, that they have not been accustomed to the comforts of life, that they are poor and should become accustomed to working without seeking relief, that the house is poor, too, and that we must economize? Do we ever cause them to murmur and complain by overburdening them with work without procuring them the rest and care which their health demands? Do we look upon them as a means of gain to the House (forgetting that the house exists only for the spiritual gain of souls? Are we attentive, vigilant? Do we

know each of our children as well as we need to? Do we study them? Do we know how to impose privations and penances upon ourselves for them?

Besides this direction properly so called, a Religious may spontaneously open her heart to her Superior; the latter may also lend herself to this manifestation, but she must not exact it nor even provoke it by questions. Such is the spirit of the new decree of Dec. 17th, 1890.

Manifestly, everything exterior in the exercises falls within the power of the Superior, who should know and ask whether her Religious are faithful to their vows, the rules of silence, mortification, charity, attendance at the Office, and other observations prescribed by Founders; it is profitable for a Religious to be questioned in this regard and she should answer simply and truthfully.

But it always rests with her to speak or be silent with regard to the interior dispositions in which she performs her duties.

The decree remarks that sometimes this manifestation may even become "an occasion of danger to souls, of anxiety of conscience and disturbance of external peace," so it is important to remember this and guard against every scruple on this point.

And yet, sometimes a free and spontaneous manifestation may be useful to a soul. Not infrequently a troubled soul goes to her Superior, and even before entering her room, finds herself enlightened and consoled. Rodriguez makes this remark. The fact is, God is pleased to bestow His grace upon the humble of heart who seek Him sincerely and simply.

Let us not be afraid of fatiguing our Superiors, nor of losing our reputation with them by reveal-

ing our miseries and our spiritual infirmities to them. Thew will esteem us more for our sincerity, humility, and confidence, than they will despise us for our weakness. Besides, they are well aware, through themselves and their experience with souls, of the nothingness and corruption of man, and also how proud he is and inclined to conceal himself.

VI. CONFESSION.

It will be easy and abundantly fruitful for salvation if the three-fold examen is made regularly, as indicated in the Fourth Supplementary Article.

What can we say about Confession? It is so vast and so profound a subject! And yet may we not say that the Tenth Article of the Directory, in its brevity, is almost exhaustive? Let us read those pages attentively; let us see if all our Confessions are a faithful practice of it; and if, after this examen, we are so fortunate as to give an affirmative answer, let us be perfectly at ease; our Confessions are such as God wants them to be.

The end of the Sacrament of Penance is the one we should propose to ourselves in all our Confessions. Now this Sacrament was established to destroy sin and its baneful effects, and to produce quite contrary effects.

We have already said in our Meditations that Venial Sin sullies and weakens the soul; by wounding it, it deadens its delicacy of relation with God. By destroying sin, Confession destroys those baneful effects, restores to the soul its purity and strength, and to the conscience, its delicacy.

1. Confession restores to the soul its youth and vigour, its purity and beauty.

Purity is the condition of a thing when it is simple and unalloyed, so to speak—pure water, pure wine. However pure these two liquids may be, if you mix them you have neither pure water nor pure wine. A pure soul, therefore, is one that is unmixed with anything created; such a soul is happy, for, according to Jesus' promise, she sees God in all things and all things in God; she has a knowledge of the interior life for herself and for others (a knowledge which books cannot give); she enjoys a holy familiarity with her divine Spouse, she possesses Him, caresses Him, and is caressed by Him, He is all hers as she is all His.

But alas! How many obstacles to this desirable purity. Original corruption; what our past faults have added to it, and the demon and the world engaged in multiplying obstacles.

But lo, the King, friend of pure hearts, has opened up many probatic reservoirs in which we may plunge as soon as the least stain appears on our white baptismal robe! The sacramentals, acts of contrition and love, and every act of virtue in general; still, the most efficacious reservoir is holy Confession. There, souls are purified and being washed in the Blood of the Lamb without spot, are restored to the brightness of their pristine beauty. Ah! the Blood of Jesus! The Blood of His Heart! How can we refrain from plunging into the reservoirs whence it gushes forth? How can we refrain from crying out incessantly to Heaven: "O, may this Blood fall again and again upon me! May it purify and sanctify me whilst strengthening me!" With what loving veneration should the Spouse of the Divine Victim gather up the least drops of Blood of her Spouse!

2. Confession restores strength and vigour to the soul. Mortal sin, by depriving us of God, takes away all strength, since without Him we can do nothing. "Sine me nihil potestis facere," He says.

Though it does not separate us from God, venial sin wounds us, exhausts us, diminishes actual grace; it weakens the virtues, especially divine charity, all the gifts of the Holy Ghost and facility in doing good. How sad for a soldier, a traveller, to lose his strength and his blood! If this condition is prolonged, it soon causes death!

Confession heals these wounds by pouring in oil and wine, renews our youth like the eagle. Do we not experience it after each Confession that we have done well. Alongside our personal weakness we feel the omnipotent strength of God when we emerge from this purifying bath! What determination in our resolution! What energy in our will! What new inclinations to good in our whole interior being!

Lastly, Confession restores delicacy of conscience. This delicacy may spring from fear; the slave trembles before his master and does his utmost not to incur his reproaches; it may also spring from love, which wishes to please its beloved and dreads nothing so much as offending Him. With the Religious of Our Lady of Charity more than any other, delicacy of conscience should spring from "charity": perfect love, which cannot endure a fault and trembles and flees from the least sin, as she would on seeing a serpent. This perfect love incessantly repeats in the ears of the soul, "Quasi a facie colubri, fuge peccato": "Fly from sin as from the face of the serpent." The pupil of the eye cannot bear the smallest grain

of dust; so it is with a delicate conscience, it cannot endure the least imperfection.

This delicacy of conscience should be brought to bear: (1) On mortal sins; rather die a thousand times than commit one; (2) venial sins; can a soul who truly loves her God consent to wound or grieve Him ever so little? (3) on faults of frailty, on imperfections and the passions which are their source. The Religious soul, the true daughter of Our Lady of Charity, should aim at this third degree. A soul is not delicate if, when she feels herself guilty of any fault whatever, she does not feel the need of being cleansed as soon as possible and obtaining pardon. Ere long, what she deemed unworthy of her, would no longer terrify her, she would grow accustomed to drinking iniquity like water: "Bibi quasi aquam iniquitatem," says Holy Scripture.

On the contrary, frequent Confession made with a real desire of purifying our souls in the Blood of the Immaculate Lamb, makes the conscience more and more delicate so that we can no longer live with any cause of grief or coldness to our divine Spouse.

"Being established to remit sins committed after Baptism," says one of our modern theologians, "the necessary matter of the Sacrament of Penance is mortal sin only. Venial sin is a matter of choice; pure imperfections are not sufficient matter.

"Sin is a deliberate transgression against the law of God; a sin is mortal when there is grave matter, entire knowledge and full consent; if a single one of these conditions is imperfect, the sin is only venial; and if one of the last two conditions is utterly wanting, there is no sin whatever.

"Here we need not speak of mortal sins; it suffices to say that a Religious who neglects her rules, her duties, who commits venial sins easily, cannot long remain in the state of grace.

"1. Venial sins, especially those which have been committed with a greater knowledge, should be confessed, such as bad thoughts which have not been promptly banished; and also thoughts, desires, words and actions, arising from vanity, sensuality, presumption, pusillanimity, anger and jealousy.

"2. Deliberate imperfections should be matter of Confession with a Religious. An imperfection is a transgression of a counsel given either in the Gospel or by Superiors or enlightened Directors, or even by the inspiration of grace which inclines us to greater meekness, mortification and recollection.

'Taken in itself, this imperfection is not a sin; and if I perform this act of meekness less great, from a good and reasonable motive, I may perform an act meritorious for Heaven, I will at least perform a good act. But if I give myself up to transgression of the counsels through caprice, self-love, or immortification, I do not perform a good act; only ignorance or inadvertence can exempt me from sin, for my intention is bad.

"In practice, these imperfections, if performed with a vicious intention, through vanity, jealousy or sensuality, unless excused by inadvertence, are not exempt from venial sin, since we have an evil intention which deviates from our final end. Besides, it is certain that to take food, merely for the pleasure of taking it, is a sin; so, for the same reason, what is done through vanity, jealousy, negligence or anger is likewise a sin.

"What is done to avoid humiliation or suffering, is not bad in itself; but it is easy to go from this intention to self-love or sensuality. Thus, voluntary imperfections frequently include venial sin.

"The same may be said of violation of the Rule which does not bind under pain of sin. Even when there is no scandal in violating it, there is always contempt, self-love or sensuality and hence even venial sin."

Now, it is of advantage to accuse one's self of these transgressions, not of all of them, but of those which most grieve Our Lord; the practice of the Saints proves it and reason indicates it.

As to the dispositions, they are reduced to four: examen, sorrow, confession and confidence; we will merely mention them.

1. Examen: It will be easy if we are faithful in making our general examen twice, our examen of foresight and our particular examen every day.

2. Sorrow: It will easily spring up in our heart if, after earnestly beseeching it of God, we think of the Infinite Goodness of the Spouse Whom we have offended, of the grief we have caused Him, and all that He has done and still does for us continually; a good purpose will then fill our soul; without it we must not put faith in our contrition.

It would also be very good, like Mgr. de la Motte, Bishop of Amiens, to take our stand in Heaven, in Hell and on Calvary, considering that mortal sin deprives us of the joys of Heaven, makes us worthy of the torments of Hell and renews the sufferings of Jesus on the Cross. This practice is very appropriate to excite all the dispositions necessary to profit by this Sacrament of mercy.

3. Confession: The tenth article of the Directory tells us in a few words all that it should be—sincere, short, simple and clear. "We must honour God and the Sacred Priesthood in the person of the Priest, looking upon him in Confession as an angel of God sent by Him to reconcile us with His divine Goodness."

4. Confidence: How the soul would be moved to it, full of it, if she really grasped the meaning of the first words of Confession: "Bless me, Father—I confess to Almighty God." She is speaking to her Father, and that Father is God, God Who loves her and wishes to heal her, God Who already knows everything and from Whom she can conceal nothing!

The want of confidence, timidity, the trouble we experience in Confession (and this may also extend to direction) frequently springs from the want of a spirit of faith, from pride and self-love. If it were possible to make a complete abstraction of the man and make a Confession as to God alone, certainly this act would not cost us any more than prayer, and interior converse with Our Lord. We would speak with the same liberty and every word spoken would be received as an oracle; we would kneel before our Confessor as a child before her father; as a Spouse before her Lord Whom she has offended; as every soul kneels before the Altar at times when she is sinking beneath a burden of sorrows.

Such confessions would work wondrous transformations in a soul and lead it to that eminent purity which has the privilege of seeing God, of having Him for a Friend and communicating familiarly and intimately with Him.

ADVANTAGES OF THE COMMON LIFE.

(By Rev. Mother de Sales Chappuis.)

"The Apostles in the Cenacle assisted each other by their prayers; strength always exists in union formed for God and where God exists. We find our strength in the common life. The common life brings us every blessing; it is an abundant source of good works which is shared daily by all and whose effect aids, encourages, strengthens.

"We cannot sufficiently appreciate the advantages of the common life, only at death will they be known to us, when our Saviour, giving Himself to us in His fulness, will reveal what we have received from the common life.

"But as we all know, our Saviour will not give Himself in His fulness to souls at death with whom He could not abide in His fulness in life, and He exists in His fulness in the common life."

"To be in common is to receive from the Community and give to it. The common is not in its entirety, in its whole, in its fulness, if every member does not do what she should. What she does not do is a good of which she deprives the Community whose treasure, in that case, is not entire. We must be very jealous about refusing it anything, giving everything so as to take from the common whatever we need.

The common life is something so valuable before God that the infidelity of one of our Sisters should affect us as deeply as our very own; and indeed it does affect us, for what she loses, we lose with her; what she takes from God, we do not give Him, and this grieves a soul who loves God.

"Our Saviour daily distributes His merits to souls who live in Community, each one receives a share in proportion to her fidelity to the common life and her contribution to the common store.

"The respect, the esteem, we should have for the Community life should appear in all our mutual dealings, public as well as private. We should treat each other with honour, respect, humility and cordiality. Discretion is as necessary in deed as in word. And if we suffer, if we are not treated as we should be, let us not fail in our duty on that account, let us not do as we are done by; that would be to take justice in our own hands, and when we do so we must not expect it any more. Let us rather practise the charity and leave the rest to our Saviour. He will know how to administer justice and at death, it will be an advantage to us to have Him take up our defence, to be our stay, our protector.

"Many love the advantages of the common life, but few can endure its trials and disadvantages. They willingly accept what is pleasant; it is but right to share its inconveniences and difficulties.

"Generous souls see few difficulties or disadvantages in the common life; they do not dwell upon them, and if they see them they are very glad to have a few sacrifices to make and offer in thanksgiving for all the blessings and advantages they enjoy. St. Francis de Sales, telling us that we should prefer one of our Sisters to accomplish an act of virtue which we might have done, if it should be more pleasing to God than one we should do ourselves, shows us how we should love the interests, the glory of God and lose ourselves in the Community.

"If he has said it, it was not only that it might be written, but above all, that it should be practised. We will, therefore, love God a great deal and also our Sisters a great deal, with whom we are united to live the same life, receive the same graces, go to God by the same means. Union of hearts makes unity of sentiment, unity of will and affection; this union is formed by the destruction of our own judgment and of the inclinations of our own mind. If this labour is an effort, we must not consider it nor give any attention to it; for reasoning and imagination would weaken us, but we must have recourse to our Saviour, Who is in our midst, to receive grace and strength.

"We must, of necessity, attain our place in the Community of the next life, even if it should be the lowest; but in the Community here, we must not fail in generosity nor be pusillanimous, and we must not be afraid to make progress towards God, we must desire to attain the place destined for us, whether it be first or last. To do so we must conform our judgment, inclinatione and will to the Community. The more we conform to the Community the nearer we approach our Saviour, Who is its centre!"

VIII. EDUCATION.

Being called by our vocation to educate or re-educate the souls entrusted to us, we cannot omit so important a subject from our retreat meditations.

Every Religious of Our Lady of Charity should have a true conception of education, its import, its end, and the means to atttain it, since, by her Vow, she consecrates herself to this work, a work which is the essence of her particular vo-

cation. She must know what she binds herself to, to what sublime duties Providence calls her, and above all, how she will respond to the signal honour bestowed upon her.

If it is a difficult task to educate a soul, it is an incomparably more difficult task to repair that education when it is wanting, perverted by evil principles, shackled or annulled by the violence of the passions, as is the case with our poor Penitents.

But, as both are our incumbent duty, we should know the general rules of education and of restoration.

During our Novitiate, we had to penetrate the depths of this necessary science; but it is important to revert to it from time to time and examine ourselves as to how we practise it.

Education, says pedagogy, is the art of developing the physical, intellectual and moral faculties of a child. This brief and dry definition cannot give any idea of education from a supernatural point of view.

We must address this question to our adorable Master Himself: What is Education? His whole life is the reply to this question, for it is one long lesson of divine pedagogy of which the Gospel is the summary: "Ego veni ut vitam habeant et abundantius habeant": "I am come that they may have life and may have it more abundantly." Such is the device of every educator worthy of the name.

Education is, therefore, the art of setting a soul in the path of eternal life; or of painting on a cloth, still new, the first outlines of a wondrous picture, the picture of God Himself; or of raising a soul; that is to say, causing it to overcome every object inferior to its nature; to develop it,

i.e., to unfold its noblest powers to their fullest extent.

To fully understand the grandeur of education we must consider it, neither in its beginning nor in its progress, but in its final end: God and Heaven! God in the midst of His glory and all resplendent with grace and Heavenly beauty, that soul, child of God, seated near her Adorable Father and truly reigning with Him! Who raised it to those sublime heights? What was the first beam of that wondrous glory? What lucky creature gave that child of God an education in accordance with her condition, with her divine birth?

Need we wonder that we meet with difficulties in such a task? Is it strange that the education of a King's son demands incomparably greater care than that of a shepherd's son? How will it be with a prince of the Heavenly Court, a child of God? The difficulty of a work is always in proportion to its importance. To sow the first seeds of virtue in a soul, the first foundations of perfection, the first glimpse of the divine light of eternal day, to inspire it with tastes and sentiments in accordance with its divine origin, to make it contract habits conformable to its eternal destiny, is this the work of a man or an angel? What can a human creature do in so excellent a work?

And yet (mystery of mysteries condescension), God chooses this miserable creature to labour with Him on His masterpiece of power and love!

If He willed it so, God could have educated a soul merely by means of His inspirations and touches of grace—and what perfection it would have attained under this sole Master. Frequent-

ly man does nothing but impede and delay divine action, when he does not ruin it completely as in souls that are radically lost through having received a bad, false or insufficient education. Alas! these souls are much more numerous than is commonly believed—a truth which should make those who are called, by their vocation, to the salvation of souls, tremble; or better, a truth capable of enkindling their zeal for so sublime an office.

By rights, it is to God alone (or the Angel to whom God confines it on its entrance to this world) that the education of a soul belongs. But if that adorable Father, that Sovereign Master, deigns to delegate one of His creatures to this noble duty, what should be the sanctity of one so chosen?

As far as poor human nature allows, the divine mandate with which she is honoured intends her to be an angel—a god!

An angel! A God! Behold the impression which every perfect educator, and with greater reason, every spouse of God, should make upon souls whose education is entrusted to her! Everything about a person teaching virtue should breathe God and the most eminent virtue. "The pastor must be the model of the flock," says the Prince of the Apostles. Being Religious, vowed to the instruction and conversion of the least of the flock of Jesus, let us apply these words to ourselves; let us live and act in such a way as to merit being copied by our spiritual children. They expect to find in us a living ideal of virtue and of Christian sanctity. When we appear before them, their good angels must be able to whisper to them: "Look, and make it according to the pattern that is shown thee!"

But how vigilant we must be so as constantly to be a perfect model of every virtue in the wide-open eyes of the children.

"What is education," said the celebrated Scotch philosopher, Dugald Stewart, at the beginning of this century, "if not the application of rules deduced from our own experience or that of others as to the most efficacious means of cultivating the intellectual and moral faculties?" Words full of meaning, which mark out for each of us the path to follow in raising (in the true and spiritual sense of the world) the children entrusted to us. Now, this "own experience" is nothing but the result of the practice of life and the two-fold observation of souls and self.

1. The observation of children is the study of their character and their dispositions, their aptitude and their inclinations, an observation of them in order to attain a knowledge of the means, the use of which will best serve to penetrate their understanding and their memories with the notions we wish to give them, to prevent or combat, if need be, the invasion or development of faults, to second the play of good inclinations and make them contract habits which should be the result of a Christian education and which are the guarantee of a moral and religious life.

This enumeration, while apparently long, is still very incomplete; it includes but part of the point on which our attention should be fixed. It suffices, however, to present it to the mind to realize immediately, how necessary, nay, indispensable, this observation is to us to succeed in the education of some and in the restoration of others.

2. It is not so with self-observation. If, however little we reflect, we find how important it is

to study the nature of the person we have to form or reform so as to labour at their perfection, unfortunately we do not understand as well, how far self-observation is necessary for the accomplishment of this task. And yet nothing is truer.

The success of our lessons, of our counsels, does not merely depend on the dispositions of our children, it depends on ourselves, on our behaviour towards them. How often we reprove them sharply, angrily, according to our dispositions at the time, we reprimand them, punish them even for slight faults, which, under different circumstances, might pass unnoticed or with a simple remark from us. If we listened attentively, would we not sometimes hear our children whispering among themselves early in the morning: "Let us watch ourselves! It will be a bad day! Mother is in bad humour!"

How often, too, we are blunt with them because they do not understand what we have not explained clearly enough, imputing to them a fault which is our own!

How often, also, in our eagerness to quickly attain the desired end, we are irritated at their slowness, we urge them, we torment them without perceiving that our impatience and brusqueness only serve to increase their confusion of mind.

Let us endeavour to be perfect; let us avoid the petty faults and all that we reprove in our children, so that after every observation of ours they may say: "Indeed that is wrong; Mother does not do it!" Let us be constantly on our guard against our passions and our temper. As we have to deal with clairvoyants whom nothing escapes and who are always inclined to judge souls who reprove them to their disadvantage, let us be very vigilant, yet without affectation, in

measuring our looks, our words, our behaviour, our whole exterior.

"Still," remarks Fenelon, "although you watch over yourself so as to let nothing but good appear, do not expect the children not to find any fault in you; frequently they will perceive even the least faults! St. Augustine tells us that, even from his childhood he noticed the vanity of his teachers! Usually, those who govern children forgive them nothing and forgive themselves everything, which arouses a critical spirit in children. Do not be afraid of speaking of faults which are visible in you and faults which have escaped you in the presence of these souls. If you find them capable of listening to reason thereon, tell them that you intend to give them an example of correcting their faults by correcting your own; thereby you will draw from your very imperfections wherein to instruct and edify the children; you will even avoid the contempt and dislike which your faults might entail."

The Religious of Our Lady of Charity will easily understand the necessity of the double observation of which we have just spoken, if she considers the work of her Fourth Vow in a spirit of faith.

From this spirit will spring supernatural devotedness, that devotedness which enkindles in souls a thirst for sacrifice and self-immolation.

Now, the first effect of that true and perfect devotedness is to clothe one's self with all the virtues required by so difficult a task, but one, too, which is important and agreeable in the sight of God.

For every Mistress, whatever class of children she is directing, those virtues are: Kindness and meekness, united with firmness, vigilance and ex-

actness, zeal and prudence. All must be studied and copied in the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

1. Kindness.—Before all else, let us remember that these children never give us anything but the sweet name of Mother. Now, the characteristic of a mother is kindness, i.e., love which is shown, diffused and poured out, love which gives, consecrates itself, love which appears not merely in words, but before all, in deeds, in care and constant devotedness.

A mother's heart is a treasury of compassionate kindness and sweet affection, of indulgence and mercy.

A mother's heart is the sacrament of kindness and the living manifestation of the kindness of God Himself. Does not our Divine Master tell us so by taking a mother's heart as the last and supreme comparison of His love for us? "Even should a mother forget her child," which is impossible, unheard of, He seems to say.

No, there is nothing so kind as a mother's heart, and for the children whom grace causes us to adopt, ours should be nothing but "a mother's heart." Ah! yes, be kind! It is the best way to make souls good. Be mothers! Be tender! Let us love as mothers, these dear souls who, for the most part, have never enjoyed the comfort of maternal love, or who are now deprived of it! Our love may preserve them from many dangers, and console them for many trials. "Make them happy so that they may be good!" Mgr. Marechal frequently repeated, speaking of children. Let us take this advice to ourselves.

2. Meekness.—With what exquisite meekness a mother treats her little child? What delicate attention? How many precautions not to hurt

it, especially if it is weak and ill! This meekness, the flower of kindness, the perfume of charity, beams from her countenance and from her whole person, to which it lends an incomparable charm, an irresistible power of attraction! Reproaches from the lips of a gentle person are almost confits, and those to whom they are addressed always receive them with calmness and docility, if not with joy and gratitude.

The Customs say: "They should be particularly careful never to reprove the children when they are excited or in the heart of passion; far from correcting them, there would be reason to fear that instead of drawing fruit from the reproof, the former will only become the more enraged. It is on such occasions especially that the Mistresses should pray for guidance so as not to act on impulse and to do all that lies in their power to win them to Jesus Christ."

Mme. de Maintenon wrote to the religious of St. Louis: "You speak to your children sharply, angrily, brusquely, which will close all hearts against you; they must feel that you love them, that you are sorry for their faults, for their own good, and that you are quite confident that they will correct them; you must be tactful, encourage them, even praise them; in a word, we must employ everything except severity, which never leads to God."

"You are too much of a piece; you would be all right to live with saints, but you must be able to bend to all sorts of persons, and especially to that of a good mother with a large family whom she loves equally.'

3. Firmness. "Whether they act through kindness or firmness, according to circumstances, sin-

cere charity should always be the rule of their conduct," says the Customs.

Kindness and meekness by no means exclude firmness. "This is necessary, first of all," says Mgr. Dupanloup. "It is through want of firmness that children who might make excellent subjects become deplorable beings; I am fully convinced of this."

We must arm ourselves with strength and energy to reprove and punish in spite of the natural repugnance we feel to doing so. Besides, on nearer view, this firmness, far from being opposed to kindness, is, on the contrary, inspired only by a true, Christian and supernatural love. Sooner or later, the children realize it and glory in the reprimands they have received, the penances they performed, or else they deplore the cruel indulgence which did not root out evil from their heart.

"My God!" exclaims our holy Father St. Augustine in his Confessions, "how much I was to be pitied in the days of my blind youth! I wandered far from Thee, O Lord, following the bent of my passions, and my father, far from reproving me, laughed at it all. I was ruining myself and he was so cruel as to watch me hastening to my ruin without stopping me! Every vice grew up in my heart like bad weeds in an untilled field, and there was no charitable hand to root them out."

All the unhappy victims of vice have not sufficient faith to deplore the weakness of those who brought them up during their life time; but how many children, in the awful day of God's vengeance will blame the over-indulgence which ruined them?

We should not merely seek to know the faults of our children, but after discovering them, we

must take a strong resolution to correct them and, to that end, we must spare neither admonitions, reprimands nor punishment. It is better to see the children shedding tears now than to be obliged to weep for them later on.

If they are only guilty of the least omission, we must gently admonish them; if they are more guilty we must mingle grave reproaches with admonitions.

Sometimes it is good to be indulgent to light faults, but we should never pass over a want of respect. Let us not allow them to profane the authority with which we are clothed; for, as we have said, it is a divine thing!

Without leaving a child under the impression of grief or loneliness, after punishing her, it is not becoming to humble one's self before her, nor to lavish attention and caresses upon her; that might give her an idea that we were wrong in punishing her and that we acknowledged it.

Neither must we ever pass over faults with which we have once been justly severe. This would be acting capriciously, being indulgent and severe by turns on the same point.

It would also be an illusion to believe that we must spare a young child because her sensitiveness can brook neither reprimand nor punishment; such weakness can only harm those whose excessive sensitiveness we respect. When, later on, they have to endure the humiliations and contradictions with which life abounds, will those souls whom we have spared, and hence allowed their sensitiveness and self-love to go on growing, be able to bear the burden of trial?

Assuredly, with such children, we must know how to await the favourable moment to give a correction, but we must never omit it and so

as the faults are repeated, we must reprove and punish unwearyingly.

Without this persevering firmness, correction will never attain its end, which is to uproot the child's faults. "The wood-cutter," says St. Chrysostom, "when he wants to fell a strong oak tree, takes an axe and strikes the root; if the tree does not fall at the first blow, he strikes a second, and if necessary, a tenth time. Do likewise; the tree is the child's faults."

"There is a wrong kind of firmness," says Bossuet. "It is harshness, severity, obstinacy." "Any firmness which is not based on kindness is a false firmness," says the eminent Bishop of Orleans.

A young plant that is bent, breaks in the hand which straightens it too abruptly.

"Every time we deal with anything similar," says Mgr. Dupanloup, "nay, with any creature, we must, first of all, inspire it with confidence. If we do not inspire the children with it, we shall not know them. As soon as they distrust, they hide themselves."

"Provoke not your children to anger," says St. Paul.

In his "Treatise on the Education of Girls," Fenelon says: "Make them love you, that they may be free with you and that they may not be afraid to let you see their faults. In order to succeed in this, be indulgent to those who conceal nothing from you; do not appear surprised or angry at their evil inclination; on the contrary, compassionate their weakness. Sometimes this may result in their being less restrained by fear, but, on the whole, confidence and sincerity will be more useful to them than rigorous severity."

Joy and confidence must be their habitual dispositions, otherwise their mind is darkened;

they are discouraged; if they are lively, they are irritated; if they are soft, they become stupid. A soul led by fear is always weak.

Without extreme necessity, never assume an austere and serious air which frightens children. Usually, they are only too timid and shy. You would close your heart to them and destroy their confidence without which you can expect no fruit from education.

"How many souls," exclaims Father Berthier in 'The Mother After the Heart of God,' have been precipitated into the abyss because they did not find the confidence they needed in those who trained them, but, on the contrary, met only coldness and severity.

"Your children must see that you love them and that you are firm and severe only through kindness and for their own good. It is good to tell them kindly sometimes; my child, you have faults like everyone else; these faults would be a source of every misery to you; it is my duty to help you to stifle those germs of iniquity and you should be grateful even for the penances I will be obliged to impose upon you, so as to restrain you from evil. I cannot succeed in this work on which your future depends unless you yourself endeavour to know and to combat your preverse inclination with me.

"Such words will inspire the child with a desire to discover the evil tendencies of her nature. Then, you can make her observe her defects, being careful never to reproach her with more than one fault at a time; to point out several would discourage her.

"Since we know what we must correct, we may then tell her that we are going to work together at it.

"And if the child forgets herself, we must first admonish her charitably. If, after a few admonitions, she falls again, it is time to put more firmness in our reprimands, but without ever indulging in haughty reproaches, jeers or jokes."

Mgr. Dupanloup says: "It is not good to reprove immediately. Never reprove a child either at her first moment nor at yours. If you do so at yours, she sees that you act through temper and hastiness; you lose your authority irretrievably. If you reprove her at hers, her mind is not sufficiently free to acknowledge her fault and to realize the importance of your advice. Observe every movement, if need be, so that your direction may be well timed. It is easier to be irritated than to have patience; it is more agreeable to haughtiness and human impatience to strike those who resist than to bear with them, but the end is not attained."

Still, we must not always threaten and reprimand and never punish, for fear of rendering reprimands and threats useless. According to St. Chrysostom's recommendation, let us employ painful remedies to cure those whose health is not restored by kindly remedies, without, however, swerving from the wise rules prescribed by Fenelon. "In punishment," he says, "the pain should be as light as possible, although proportioned to the fault, but accompanied by every circumstance which might move the child to shame and remorse. For example, show her all that you have done to avoid this extremity, appear sorry for it, retrench the usual marks of friendship until she needs consolation; make the punishment public or private according as it may be useful to the child."

Lastly, to sum up, we may say with St. Gregory: "There must be love in the correction, but not a weak love; let there be severity, but not a disheartening severity, so that, mingling justice with clemency, we may inspire the child with both confidence and fear. Let us command obedience by severity and love by meekness."

Let firmness inspire respect and kindness conciliate affection and confidence. Mme. Acarie's direction of her children is one of the finest commentaries on St. Gregory's words. The biographer of this admirable woman says: "A word, a glance from her, was sufficient to remind her children of their duty when they were doing wrong; but her empire over them was meek and amiable because it was the result of her virtue rather than her maternal authority."

"She treated us very gently," says her eldest daughter, "but with her meekness was a gravity so majestic and so imposing that it was impossible for us to resist her wishes. When she was obliged to punish us she did it so agreeably that it never occurred to me that she corrected me unjustly and I never felt any resentment."

"She was not satisfied that her children should ingenuously acknowledge their faults when questioned; she wished them to acknowledge them by themselves by the mere instinct of humble repentance. Then, she would show them the nature of the fault they had committed and tell them that they must satisfy Divine Justice either in this world or in the next, that the suffering we voluntarily endure in this life is very efficacious in appeasing God's wrath; she also inspired them with horror for the faults they had committed and led them to ask for the penance which she then imposed upon them. If they were too much afraid of the

chastisement at the time, she did not punish them, but waited until God had moved them to repentance, then she would punish them justly and moderately, at the same time inducing them to say an Our Father to beg God's pardon.

"Children so reprimanded, far from resisting the punishment imposed upon them, easily admitted that they deserved it, begged for it with hands joined, and, after receiving the correction, thanked their mother for the charity she had shown them in correcting them."

Every true Daughter of Our Lady of Charity should so act towards children that they may give the same testimony of her.

5. Vigilance.—"If you have children," says the Holy Spirit, "watch carefully over them and do not recoil from this solicitude which sometimes requires vigilant parents to deprive themselves of sleep."

Being mothers, according to grace, should we not watch over our children more carefully than natural mothers watch over theirs? We have to guard innocence in the young souls confided to us. Innocence! the greatest and most precious treasure of man here below! A foretaste of Heaven to a soul! The source of all true consolation! The only true peace in this valley of tears! Innocence! Reflection of the sanctity of God!

"Guard this treasure with the utmost care and do your best to protect it from the cunning thief who seeks to rob it," says St. Chrysostom.

Let us surround this dear and precious treasure with our vigilance. Vigilance is a mother's glance following her child everywhere, to remove everything which might injure her and anticipate her slightest needs. A glance sovereignly gentle, tender and affectionate, attentive and penetrating.

This maternal vigilance never worries those who are its objects because they instinctively feel that it springs from love.

If we really love our young children, we will watch over them tenderly; for it is characteristic of love to be vigilant, and a mother's glance is a rampart of her child's innocence and virtue.

We will watch, no less lovingly, over those whose passions are awake and who should be "preserved" by us from the taint of vice.

As to our privileged children, our dear penitents, we will surround them with a special vigilance, we will guard them as the apple of our eye, we will not lose sight of them as far as that is possible; everything about them, words, looks, actions, deportment, gesture, manners, will be the object of our maternal vigilance. Woe to us if any of these souls happen to be lost through want of vigilance on our part! What will we say to God when He demands an account of these souls? Shall we say with Cain: "Was I their keeper?" "Yes," our Divine Spouse, Who will then be our Judge, would answer: "It was your special mission to guard them; you were bound to it by Vow; I entrusted these souls to you and you went bail for them! I curse you because of your negligence!"

Mme. de Maintenon seems to be speaking to us when she tells the Ladies of St. Louis: "This morning whilst reflecting on the austerities that several of you wanted to practise and which are not customary with us, I found that the incessant vigilance we must practise with the children was a good one; I think it even more difficult because it is an every-day affair and naturally we love change. It is very easy to relax on this point, which is such an important one, if we are not careful to renew it frequently. During retreats,

on great feast days, at our exercises of devotion, in our examens, we must ask ourselves: have I relaxed my vigilance over the children this year, this month, this week, this day? Have I been sufficiently observant of their conduct on such an occasion? Have I spoken fittingly on such a one? Have I prevented them from speaking together? Or have I been attentive to what they were saying? Have I observed what so and so were doing together? What they were writing?

Do I think of being useful to them when I am with them? Do I sometimes plan what to say to them? Do I depend too much on the Sister to whom I have entrusted them?

"This renewal is all the more necessary when your children appear more inclined to good and more docile than ever. You may imagine that there is less need to watch them closely; but be assured that it is because you are so vigilant that they are so easy to manage, and that as soon as you cease to observe them, they will become difficult. There will not seem to be much difference exteriorly, they will perhaps charm you with their conduct, but some fine day you will be quite surprised to find a bad spirit in the majority and so much relaxation that you will have all the trouble imaginable in setting matters to rights and re-establishing the honesty, simplicity, docility and innocence which are so desirable. The way to avoid petty disorders which might occur in your class, I repeat it once more, is that incessant vigilance even at times when it seems less necessary." (Extract from her letters).

We must also see that our children are neither constrained nor forced and, from time to time, must provide them with pleasant recreation and

diversion which may allow them to expand. If we notice that they are sullen, sad or lonely, let us not scold them without knowing its cause; perhaps they are in temptation or are suffering spiritually or physically; let us not ignore it, but seek some means of recreating them and making their stay in the House as pleasant as possible. In a word, let the aim of our vigilance be to make our children happy and contented by making them good and virtuous.

5. Exactitude.—A rule is necessary, yea, indispensable, in every class; and we mean a fixed and precise rule. If there is not an established rule, written and known, if it is formulated on every special occasion by the Mistress in charge, it assumes an arbitrary and capricious character which may injure our authority and the good spirit of the children.

If there is a set rule, on the contrary, everyone knows her duty; those who fail cannot allege their ignorance; and, above all, the Mistress has only to speak in the name of the law and see to its fulfilment; her words are weightier and better heeded.

A Religious of Our Lady of Charity in whom everything should be "well ordered," should conform to the rule of the class where it is concerned, so as to facilitate its exact and integral observance by the children. She should make no change, no innovation, nor easily dispense herself nor her children from what the rule prescribes. To act otherwise would be to destroy the rule in their eyes, and, if the rule were to change with each Mistress, there would be an end to discipline and order in the class and, as a result, in the House. Our children imitate easily (and much more so when imitation follows the line of

least resistance); if we do not observe the rule, they will not observe it either. What weight would our recommendations have, if we made no account of it in practice, what right would we have to punish them for infractions of the rule which we break ourselves. That would be arbitrary, tyrannical, that is to say, all that is most likely to undermine a mistress' authority, to alienate the children's affections and ruin discipline.

Let us apply to ourselves the words of the great Apostle: "In all things show thyself an example of good works, in doctrine, in integrity, in gravity, that he who is on the contrary part, may be afraid, having no evil to say of us."

Let us be very exact in going to the classes at the proper time, let us not be absent, let us not have others disengage us without good reason.

If we are first mistresses, whilst having full confidence in our second, let us not depend too much upon her with regard to the class, let us remain there by preference and as long as possible; it is our family, our home; we should habitually be there. Let us love to see and hear for ourselves all that the children say or do. In a word, let us be a perfect model of exactitude for them.

6. Zeal.—But exactitude does not suffice; it is a material thing, so to speak; and a mistress who is punctual as to being in the class, sometimes gives very little thought as to the employment of that time to the children's advantage. She is present in body, but what use is that material presence if her mind and heart are elsewhere?

She needs a virtue which may be to the preceding what the soul is to the body, a virtue which inspires her with a noble and generous ardour so that the aim of her daily life may be not to spend

a certain number of hours with the children, but to derive the best possible results even at the cost of great fatigue from the time she should spend in her charge; in a word, she needs zeal.

Let us be fully convinced of this; without this condition our work with souls would have no good or serious results. We might, perhaps, have order and regularity in our class for a time, but the training would be nil and spiritual progress would be no better.

Zeal proceeds directly from that virtue which we have justly placed at the head of the list: kindness, i.e., love which gives itself, love which overflows, so that we may define zeal as an overflow of love. Our holy Father, St. Augustine, says: "He who has no zeal has no love!"

When we love souls, we take pleasure in being with them; our interest in them, our anxiety for their eternal welfare, constantly preoccupy us; their sanctification becomes the only aim of our life, and to attain this, there is nothing that we would not do and suffer.

The characteristic of true zeal is to make every interest of its object its own, to devote itself, to sacrifice itself for it, to seek every occasion of being useful, even pleasing to it.

Such should be our zeal; it should make virtue easy and attractive to our children by putting it within their reach and also by making them contented and happy.

Zeal is ingenious and inventive; to attain its end, it employs an infinite variety of means; if one way is closed to it, it can find ten more; everything becomes a means in its hands and in spite of every obstacle, it does good.

But there is a reef which young Religious, especially those who are full of zeal and fervour,

too often run against; they imagine that they will convert souls by preaching a great deal to them. A mistake! they bore them, weary them, that is all.

To win their hearts, to mould their character and correct their faults, we must first of all conciliate them by tender, kindly attention and great consideration, meeting their rudeness with exquisite delicacy, always appearing amiable and grave, modest and confident, polite and ladylike, as Spouses of Jesus, Daughters of the Mother of Fair Love, should be!

7. Prudence and Discretion.—Every virtue should be practised prudently and discreetly; the two latter are, as it were, the salt which preserves the others and prevents them from degenerating into vices. "Let them remember that zeal without discretion frequently degenerates into temper, therefore they should excel in patience so as calmly to bear with those whom they know to be docile and kind-hearted and who will be faithful to the observance of the rule. Still it should be no less generous in correcting and chastising the rebellious when necessary," says the Customs.

Prudence should advise us, instruct us as to the means which will lead us most surely to the desired end. Discretion will give the measure in which we should use the means furnished by her sister prudence. These two virtues are complimentary and are inseparable; prudence must be discreet and discretion must be prudent.

"Prudence directs the soul in the practice of every virtue," says St. Thomas. In all things, but especially in our dealings with the children, let us practise a holy and religious prudence in word and act, exterior and interior prudence, the prudence of the serpent, as our Divine Spouse recommends.

In appearance as in reality, let us always act with perfect frankness and perfect regularity, accompanied by a true and intelligent simplicity. Otherwise we may be sure that, sooner or later, sad consequences will result.

Like all doctors, St. Bernard says, "Prudence consists in a just discernment of what you must do and what you must not do according to circumstances." "Let thy eyes look straight on and let thy eyelids go before thy steps," says the Wise man.

Let us never do anything, let us never decide upon anything, without reflection and without a well-directed and purified intention.

If we act lightly and precipitately, without serious reflection, we will inevitably fall into abysses from which we may find it impossible to arise. He who would live wisely must live prudently and thoughtfully. "By wisdom the house shall be built, and by prudence it shall be strengthened," says the Holy Spirit.

This prudence, if well understood, will not prevent us from always being gracious and amiable with our children; on the contrary, prudence and discretion bring peace of conscience in their train and that peace fills the soul with the purest joy.

This joy is reflected in the exterior and makes them cherish the virtue which they find so amiable and so happy, no longer believing it austere and severe, they begin to love it and to desire to practise it.

If every virtue and devout person were truly animated by this intelligent prudence, devotion would not be decried and ridiculed in the world as it is. Therefore, let us always be armed with prudence and discretion, whether we are dealing with persons outside or with our children.

FATHER DE PONLEVOY'S OPINION OF HIMSELF AFTER A RETREAT.

If she has made her retreat well, if God has inundated her soul with rays of His pure light, there is not a religious soul who cannot, for the most part, apply to herself the opinion of the eminent religious whom we quote here:

1. God prevented me all through my childhood.

2. In spite of myself, God alone safeguarded my youth.

3. God not only called me, but attracted and led, yea, carried me to the Society (of Jesus).

4. God has directed me.

5. God aided and assisted, sheltered and carried me when and how I needed it.

6. God employed,—I dare not say utilized me,—and has done something with me; and that alone is a marvel and an enigma to me. No doubt it is play for God to do everything with nothing but for nothingness, it is a miracle that anything should be done with it. Divine intervention is necessary. I am not surprised that God could make use of me, but I admire His willingness to do so, incapable and unworthy as I am. Indeed, I am mediocrity, personally, naturally and spiritually, and my qualities, like my virtues, are simply negative. With all this little schedule, we may still deceive men and be somewhat deceived ourselves. Mediocrity kept up will pass for moderation, modesty, discretion, prudence and wisdom. We have just enough intelligence not to talk nonsense, enough good sense not to do foolish things,

too much timidity to expose ourselves, too much self-love to compromise self. However that may be, I cannot deceive God, and it is He Who turned me to account and did everything in me and for me.

As a poor instrument in the Divine Hand I have spoken without knowing or thinking; I have written without any style, I have governed without being able to direct myself. Alas! what do I find? It may all be told in two words: Before my vocation, evil in a positive quantity, and, since, good in a negative quantity; if I add them the sum is nothing.

Still I feel even more remorse, regret and fear for the good I have not done or which I have spoiled than for the evil I have committed.

First of all, at my age and in my condition, there was no excuse; how can I render an account? Why it is incalculable, imponderable! It must balance.

This at least I know and admit; my life has been more or less squandered and my soul remains naked and void. The innumerable graces, all the exterior means, all the occasions that I have not used or that I have abused.

If, here and there, there has been some good, it was not my fault, for I spoiled it as much as I could. and even when my works seemed good, my intentions were not so, but rather null when they were not vain and egotistic.

Yes, in my life-story, that is what has come from me, returns to me and is left to me.

Therefore "ad nihilum redactus sum": "I am reduced to nought." And I will not add like David, "et nescivi": "and I knew it not."

After reviewing the past, I foresee the future.

1. And first of all, here are my fears, serious and real fears. To be sure, I fear myself, for though incapable of anything, I am also capable of everything.

But above all, I fear God; yes, His judgments, severe and secret, present and future.

I fear lest God weary of me and abandon me by the mere fact of which I am a lost man.

That His special Providence may happen to be withdrawn from me and that I may find myself face to face with a temptation more than human, pointed out by the Apostle, an occasion or a trial, and it would be all up with me! Ah! do I deserve that the hand of God should protect me? I deserve that it should be stretched out to strike me or be withdrawn. Ah! I am afraid! and have I not reason to be?

I also fear lest God, Who is Goodness itself, but also Justice itself, to pay me in the same coin for a few apparent qualities, a few natural virtues, give me a reward equivalent to my merit; this little share of well-doing and consideration shown me in this world and nothing more beyond, I will have received my reward.

I cannot help saying it, that would be quite just; but is it not quite dreadful?

These are my two fears: that God may abandon me in this world and that He may cast me off in the next.

2. Here are my hopes:

I hope. Why? Why, because I hope; I hope because I hope in God and because I do not hope in myself.

I hope, because God is good and because I am evil. I hope that God will be merciful and patient, i.e., good to me, because He has always been so and God is not like man, who contradicts himself, who does not finish what he has begun. He alone is essentially good, independently of me. My goodness would add nothing to His, my malice would take nothing away. My inconsistency does not prevent His being constant and it seems to me, that my very misery is the best motive as well as the best object of His mercy.

I hope because God is my God, my Jesus, Who has given me His name, and in the Heart to which I have offered myself. In spite of all my wanderings and contradictions, at heart I know but Him and I desire but Him.

I hope in Mary, willing or unwilling; in Mary who has saved me from the world and who will save me from myself.

I hope for everything because I despair of everything except God. All else is nothing, less than nothing, therefore: "In te Domini speravi, supersperavi": "In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped."

THE WAY OF THE CROSS—OF THE RELIGIOUS OF OUR LADY OF CHARITY.

First Station.

Jesus, the Author of Life, Life Itself, is condemned to death.

Yes, again to-day, my Beloved Jesus is condemned to die in the hearts of so many unhappy creatures who prefer vain and Criminal pleasures to Him.

By my profession in the Order of Our Lady of Charity, I became the Spouse of this Divine Victim and the Spiritual Mother of those souls, playthings of an hour, which the world rejects after having ruined them. How zealous I should be in making known to them this amiable and all desirable Spouse Whom they condemned to death because they knew neither what He is not what true and pure happiness He bestows upon those who serve Him with love and fidelity.

I beseech Thee, O my merciful Spouse, to enlighten, with Thy divine light, those children whom Thou dost confide to me and whom we would like to make pure and worthy of Thy complacency. Let them revoke the condemnation passed upon Thee by their insensate nature, O Adorable Jesus! Let them console and rejoice Thy Sacred Heart by a sincere and generous conversion and mayest Thou live and reign in theirs forever!

Pater, Ave, Gloria, etc.

Second Station.

Jesus, laden with Divine graces for us, finds Himself laden with an ignominous Cross by us.

O what cross so heavy, for the pure heart of my Jesus, Infinite Sanctity, as the dispositions of those souls who tend only to evil and the most degrading corruption! How heavily this Cross weighs upon my dear Jesus! If He received the first joyfully, what repugnance He feels to being laden with the latter!

The weight of the one was lightened by the certain hope of a plenteous redemption by which all the elect and so many privileged souls would benefit; that of the other, on the contrary, is too often augmented by the foresight of the eternal torments which await these unhappy souls!

O God of Purity, do not, I beseech Thee, permit that those who dwell in this House may burden Thee any more with so shameful a cross! May all our penitents, by a sincere conversion, relieve Thy shoulders of the weight of their sin and take upon their own the sweet yoke of Thy divine service. O Heart of Jesus, Ocean of Purity, save these souls! O Immaculate Virgin, pray for them!

Third Station.

Jesus, having voluntarily and lovingly fallen from the bosom of His Father to the bosom of our miseries in order to withdraw us from them, now falls beneath our blows!

Is it really Thou, O my Adorable Jesus, Whom I see beneath this shameful cross?

The crushing weight of the faults and disorders of so many perverse and depraved hearts weighs Thee down and Thou fallest!

Behold Thy most pure brow in the dust of

the way! Why such abasement! Ah! The fact is that these souls created for sanctity are plunged in vice! Created for the divine joys of Thy love, they have scorned them for the most degrading pleasures and have given themselves to Thine enemy, the demon!

O, most loving Heart of my only Love, how Thou must suffer from this unworthy preference.

Oh my God, my dear Jesus, I suffer with Thee, I resent the outrage done Thee! What wouuds Thee, wounds me, and the faults of those dear and too unhappy souls, whilst tearing Thy adorable Heart, tears mine also!

But arise, O great God, O mighty God! I venture to offer Thee the feeble support of my consolation and my love. I would like to take Thee in my arms, lift Thee up and enthrone Thee in every heart!

But I conjure Thee, O Omnipotent and all-loving God, do Thou lift up from their abjection these souls created to Thy image and likeness and make them walk in the way of Thy divine Commandments. O, most meek and mighty Heart, strengthen these weak souls in virtue! O Mary, truly strong woman, sustain with thy maternal hand all those that we confide to thee!

Fourth Station.

Jesus, laden with His Cross, has met since the beginning of His Passion only impure and inhuman hearts; now he meets His holy and gentle Mother.

At last, upon Thy way, O my divine Martyr, a flower which by its whiteness and sweet perfume, at least, helped to console Thee for the putrid sight and odour of so many sin-stained souls.

What a contrast! Such sanctity on the one side! Such corruption on the other! In fine, the Virgin of Virgins, Mary, more beautiful than the lily among thorns, effaces by the splendour of her innocence and her most pure virginity, the impurity which makes Thee groan.

But, whilst consoling Thee by her purity and her love, why, O my Jesus, must Mary increase Thy sufferings by the sight of her own sorrow? Might it not be to expiate criminal attachments, evil affections, that Thou willest to suffer by the very presence and love of Thy Immaculate Mother?

I beseech Thee, O most pure and most loving Jesus, by this sorrowful meeting and by the most holy Love which unites Thee to Mary, the most loving of creatures, purify all hearts of affection to creatures, fill them with Thy divine love and that of Thy Immaculate Mother! Dear Jesus, I conjure Thee to go Thyself to meet Thy prodigal children; and do thou, Our Lady of Charity, assist them in every difficulty!

Fifth Station.

Jesus, who has no need of anyone and without Whom we can do nothing, deigns to accept the aid of the Cyrenean.

Time goes on—and the crimes of men are being multiplied!

The Cross of Jesus is becoming so heavy that He no longer seems able to bear it alone!

Ah! Here, our Bl. Founder calls upon all his daughters to help our exhausted God.

Let us generously take up this bloody cross. Let us bear it—with our Adorable Jesus — to lighten its weight by our personal purity, our prayers and our voluntary expiation, but especial-

ly by our devotedness to fallen souls! Let ue labour—but with all our might—to convert them, to purify them, to make them love virtue!

Let us generously bear to the very summit of Calvary, i.e., until death, this Cross of devotedness to souls, a cross sometimes so heavy! Although wet with blood, it will always be dear to our hearts if we can remember that we are bearing it with our Heavenly Spouse, to relieve Him by sharing His sufferings.

Let us remember that our eternal happiness will be in proportion to the weight of this cross and especially to the love with which we embraced and bore it!

But can the cross still be called a "cross" when we bear it with Jesus, to Whom it unites us more closely? Oh! no, no!

To suffer by His side is the Heaven of earth!

O, Omnipotent Jesus, permit my weakness to offer itself to Thee to be Thy little Cyrenean and to relieve Thee in Thy sufferings as Mary would have liked to do.

Sixth Station.

Jesus, Who alone can wipe away our tears, permits Veronica to wipe His face, which is bathed in sweat, spittle and blood.

As on the day of His Passion, the adorable Face of Jesus is sullied and disfigured in souls who give themselves up to their passions, in those penitents who call us "mother."

"Mother!" Ah! If we are really so, we will not be content to groan over their faults—but will repair them, expiate them!

If we sincerely love our Divine Spouse, we will restore all its beauty and brightness to His image, which is disfigured in these souls.

The face of Christ was imprinted upon the

veil of Veronica with the sweat, spittle and blood; that is all we require to restore to sin-stained souls their pristine beauty and re-engrave upon them the Divine Likeness!

Sweat: labour, generous and painstaking effort! Spittle: humility, humiliations, a true love of our own abjection! Blood: constant and cutting mortification, sufferings and renunciation, both interior and exterior! "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin!" (Heb. ix., 22).

Everything is good to me, O my God, provided I console Thee by winning souls to Thee! I am willing to endure everything for the salvation of those souls whom Thou confidest to our zeal! Like Veronica, I will brave everything to reach my Beloved. I, too, must wipe His beloved Face! Am I not His Spouse?

O my Jesus, let me be a Veronica, a consolatrix, a victim for Thee! Let me labour to reproduce Thy adorable features in sinning souls! O tender Mother of my Saviour, engrave in my heart the portrait of our Beloved as it is engraven in Thy most pure Heart!

Seventh Station.

Jesus, the strong God Who gives strength to all things, falls a second time beneath the weight of His Cross.

Alas! What sadness, what affliction the Heart of My Jesus again experiences, when these souls, after being washed and purified in His Blood, restored to His love, relapse into their evil habits, stain the robe He has just washed at the cost of so many labours, in the most infectious mire, and so prefer base satisfactions to the chaste pleasures, the pure joys that we experience in the friendship of the most faithful and tender of

friends! How much more painful this fall is than the first!

Oh! how keenly I feel this suffering of Thy Divine Heart, O my sweet Saviour, and how I should like to alleviate it!

Pardon, O my adorable Spouse, pardon for these poor souls! Lift them up a second time, I conjure Thee! Strengthen them in the way of virtue! Make them understand by experience that all pleasure which does not come from Thee is nothing and merits nothing but scorn and contempt!

O sorrowful Heart of my Jesus, let me, by dint of love and affection, console Thee for Thy grief, raise Thee from Thy fall and dress Thy divine wounds!

Eighth Station.

Jesus, Joy of the Heavenly Jerusalem, consoles the women of the terrestrial Jerusalem and teach them to weep profitably.

Daughters of Jerusalem, Daughters of Our Lady of Charity, weep not for me! But weep: 1. For yourselves, your cowardice, your infidelities, your negligence, your faults and your sins, which have brought Me to this pitiable plight!

2. Weep for your children who frequently are not what they should be because you are not always as faithful as My love demands!

Have we heard? Have we understood these words of our Divine Spouse?

Neither let us be content with weeping for His sufferings! Let us, rather, seek not to cause Him any by our faults or even by our deliberate imperfections! Let us weep bitterly, let us generously expiate those which escape us through negligence or frailty; and thereby we will obtain

that our children's faults may be less numerous and less grave.

Give, O my divine Jesus, to us and to all our children, that perfect contrition, that true charity which effaces and covers a multitude of sins!

O Jesus, forgetting Thy own sufferings to think of those of the women who followed Thee, teach me to forget self in suffering to alleviate and share those of others!

O Our Lady of Charity, obtain for me complete self-forgetfulness, perfect self-denial! Obtain for me an ardent and generous zeal for the salvation of souls!

Ninth Station.

Jesus, Son of the Most High, of the Immutable, falls a third time.

Could He fall from a higher height? Could He fall lower? Behold our meek Redeemer falling again beneath the weight of the Cross! Or rather beneath the weight of sorrow which the eternal ruin of souls who are hardened in sin, who trample underfoot His Precious Blood shed for them and finally fall into despair, causes Him.

O Jesus, gentle Saviour, I conjure Thee not to permit the souls confided to our zeal to be lost forever! Enlighten them, touch them while there is yet time, I ask it of Thee by the suffering and sorrow Thou didst experience when a third time Thou didst fall on the way to Calvary on the day of Thy dolorous Passion!

I consent, O Divine Master, to fall into all the miseries of the world, but I beseech Thee never to let me fall into sin or tepidity in the fulfilment of my fourth Vow.

Dear Jesus, weighed down by the sins of the world, have mercy on every soul burdened with iniquity and sinking under its shameful weight!

O sweet Mother of Mercy, come to the assistance of these unhappy souls, lift them up and do not let them fall into hard-heartedness and into the Eternal abyss!

Tenth Station.

Jesus, infinite riches, Who came into the world to enrich us with His grace, sees Himself stripped of His garments by us.

O my Jesus, infinite Sanctity, what sorrow and confusion Thou endurest when Thou art stripped of Thy garments! Ah! I understand it: Thou wishest to expiate in this way, the sins of those who, beneath Thy most pure gaze, strip themselves of every sentiment of honour, of shame and confusion, and above all, of that precious robe of innocence with which Thou didst clothe them in Baptism.

O Divine Lamb, who could see Thee thus despoiled and covered with Blood, without being heart-broken at the memory of the slightest faults and melted with love at the sight of such devotedness in a God?

Show Thyself in this plight to the sin-stained souls for whom I pray! Despoil them Thyself of every sentiment opposed to Thy infinite purity and clothe them, I beseech Thee, O my most pure and most holy Spouse, with innocence, sanctity and grace!

O Immaculate Virgin, why dost thou not hasten to clothe Thy Son and protect His body from the profane gaze? If thou couldst! To-day thou canst, O Mother, O Virgin, come and clothe these souls with pure and chaste dispositions!

Eleventh Station.

Jesus, the Omnipotent, the great Ruler, is nailed to the Cross by those whose hearts He wished to attach to Himself.

How Thou sufferest, O my Jesus, on that bed of pain where Thou wert so inhumanly nailed, less by the hands of the executioners than by the crimes of men which Thy immense love wishes to expiate! How dearly Thou payest! how well Thou repairest, in this condition, the criminal satisfaction and liberties of souls who seek only joy and pleasure!

O my Master, my gentle Sovereign, I beseech Thee by the suffering Thou didst endure during the Crucifixion, by Thy nails and bonds, loose the bonds of iniquity which chain the ill-starred victims of passion to sin! Nail, rivet these poor souls to Thy Cross with sorrow so poignant, repentance so sincere, that nothing may ever detach them from it again. Seeing Thee on Thy cross, let them realize all the horror of sin, and above all, the immensity of Thy love for them!

O My Jesus, Victim of the sins of the world, I desire to be a victim with Thee! Behold me ready to be stretched on any cross Thou pleasest! Here are my hands, my feet, my heart, my whole being, ready to be pierced and nailed to the Cross! But let souls who were created to love Thee, never fasten Thee to it again, O my Love!

O Mother of Love, let my heart be nailed to the Cross with Thine!

Twelfth Station.

Jesus, Life, dies on the Cross with those, to whom He brought life, prepared for Him.

In how many poor souls He is dying at the present moment! How many hearts are Calvaries for Him!

And I, cherished Spouse, should I not do my utmost to snatch Him from death? Could I hear

"Sitio" fall from His dying lips without seeking to quench that devouring thirst for souls by every means in my power? Could I see Him die on the Cross and dread suffering and flee from sacrifice?

No, no, my Beloved Jesus! Thou knowest that I love Thee and desire to share Thy sufferings! I cannot and will not ever see Thee suffer without me! Thy cross is the nuptial bed that I, as Thy Spouse, should share with Thee, O my Jesus!

I will, without truce or respite, lead to the foot of the Cross, souls in whom Thy image is impaired and nothing shall daunt me when there is question of allaying Thy sorrow and satisfying one of Thy Heart's desires!

But my Jesus, let me share still more abundantly in that thirst which devours Thee!

And thou, O Virgin, whose Heart was transpierced, O sublime Martyr, let me take up my abode with thee at the foot of the Cross of Jesus! May I die of love and sorrow!

Thirteenth Station.

The blood-stained and lifeless Body of Jesus is laid in the arms of Mary, the most loving of Mothers.

Behold, O gentle and most loving Mother, what sin has done with Thy dear Jesus! Dost thou recognize Him in this condition? Alas! dost thou recognize Him in those slaves of the world and passion?

O Mother of Sorrows, by the extreme affliction thou didst experience when the inanimate Body of thy adorable Son was laid in thy arms, I beseech Thee to take in thy arms and to thy Immaculate Heart, those souls who are dead to the

life of grace! Let one of those powerful tears which fell so abundantly on the bruised and blood-stained body of my Beloved Jesus, fall upon them! Grant that ere long we may see them revive to a more Christian and more fervent life. Remember that they are children of thy sorrow! O gentle Queen of Martyrs, let me be a martyr with thee!

Fourteenth Station.

Jesus, the Immense, the Infinite, is shut up in the Sepulchre and guarded by soldiers.

Alas! Alas! How many hearts are sepulchres for my Divine Spouse? In them He finds the solitude, darkness, corruption and horror which He did not find in the tomb.

Spouses of this Divine Dead, Who at the same time is true Life, let us pray and weep by these living sepulchres! Let us ask our God to come to life again in these souls.

If we can pray and weep as "spouse and mother," like Mary and Magdalen, some day, ere long, perhaps, we will see our Jesus live again in the souls over whom we watch.

By that happy resurrection we will be amply repaid for all that we have done and suffered for them! What will we think of those sufferings when we see in Heaven the beauty and glory which, with God's grace, we procured for those souls?

O adorable Heart of My Jesus, be now and forever my amiable and glorious tomb! Enclose me in it, seal it that I may never leave it!

O afflicted mother, teach me to weep and pray like thee to hasten the moment of Jesus' Resurrection in the souls of sinners!

BLESSED BE GOD!

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